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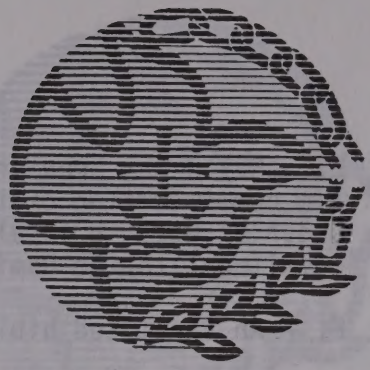

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February 1988

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Geneva!

You will find herewith the second packet of Resource Material related to the "process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of creation".

The focus of this set is precisely on the theme "Covenant/Covenanting". This issue is seen from different theological and cultural perspectives, as well as from a variety of traditions and experiences.

These supportive materials for use with groups, local congregations, base communities, etc., express the growing concern of the ecumenical movement in response to the Vancouver call.

In this set I have included several papers that can be classified as follows:

A. - An Ecumenical Discussion on the Meaning of "Covenant". Here, Dr. Konrad Raiser, professor of Ecumenical Theology at Bochum (FRG) and former Associate General Secretary of the WCC, writes about "Covenanting As A Way To A Committed Fellowship of Churches" (Doc. 1).

B. - Biblical and Homiletical Resources, where Dr. Kim Jong Bok, from Korea, director of the Graduate Programme for Third World Church Leaders, (Doc.2) and Ofelia Ortega, from Cuba, professor at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey (Doc. 3), share their views on the question.

C. - Reflections on the Frontiers of Christian Mission, with a paper on "Covenanting with the Poor", written by Dr. Levi Oracion, from the Philippines, a WCC staff member (Doc. 4).

D. - A series of efforts at covenanting among people, (yellow documents) as experiences of how Christians respond to the call to an obedient discipleship.

E. - May 4 has been chosen as a World Day of Prayer for a Free Namibia (in commemoration of the Kassinga Massacre 10 years ago). A suggested order of worship is also enclosed, to express solidarity with and commitment to the Namibian people (green document).

F. - An annotated bibliography completes this mailing.

I want to take this opportunity to share with you how pleased I am with the various responses to our first issue of "JPIC Resource Materials". Please, continue to share with us your experiences in using these materials, and any suggestions you may have to improve and maximize their use.

Next issues will be featuring "Ecumenical Convictions" on justice, peace and the integrity of creation, and an article on the "Conciliar Process" by Dr. Lukas Vischer. Likewise, the question of the "integrity of creation" will be the focus of a future packet.

With all best wishes, I am

Faithfully yours in Christ

Rev. Carlos A. Sintado
Executive Secretary for
Development Education.

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Resource Materials 2.1

COVENANTING AS A WAY TO A COMMITTED FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCHES

The Vancouver invitation to covenanting and its practical realization in churches and congregations

by Konrad Raiser

An address given on 24 February 1987 at a regional meeting of the Ecumenical Centre in West Berlin

What do we mean by covenanting?

Our subject twice mentions covenanting with specific reference to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, Canada, in 1983. It may therefore be as well to recall briefly the context of the invitation issued by that Assembly. This is probably all the more important because the terms 'covenant' and 'covenanting' are somewhat alien to most of us in our particular church tradition, though familiar and taken for granted in the Anglo-Saxon Free Church tradition.

The WCC Assembly received a report from its Issue Group on "Struggling for Justice and Human Dignity", which included among its recommendations (VI, 25): "That the churches at all levels--congregations, dioceses/synods, networks of Christian groups and base communities--together with the WCC, enter into a covenant in a conciliar process." This recommendation was later adopted by the committee which drew up guidelines for the WCC for the next 7-8 year period, in these terms: "To bind together the member churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) for justice, peace and the integrity of the whole creation, should form a main focus of work in the WCC programmes." The covenant image was also taken up again in the Report of the General Secretary to the WCC Central Committee (July 1984) in speaking of the calling of the churches and of the WCC. He reaffirmed a sentence he had formulated eight years earlier in his Report to the Nairobi Assembly when he had said, "This Assembly will have failed in its purpose if we do not advance to a new covenant relationship between the member churches at all levels of their life and the World Council at all levels of its activities."

Then, as a final reminder, some of you will have heard that on the margins of the WCC Vancouver Assembly two examples of covenanting took place. A solemn covenant, that is to say a solemn act of self-commitment, was made between the delegates from North and Central America in view of the then very acute threat to Nicaragua. Furthermore, a covenant was made between Western European delegates in view of the impending arms reinforcement decisions in Western Europe. So much by way of reminder and context.

The recommendation from the Vancouver Assembly was not exactly a matter of chance, however. The previous year, the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches had been held in Ottawa, Canada, and one of its actions had been to call its member churches to a covenant for justice and peace. The WCC Assembly took up this initiative. This points to one of the origins of this concept of covenanting, namely the Reformed tradition, which ever since Calvin and especially since John Knox, the Scots Reformer, has preserved the idea of covenanting and covenant renewal, and has handed it down in a very concrete form. This Old Testament concept became an important influence on the political and social establishment of the Puritans after their emigration to what later became the United States of America. It is therefore in this tradition of Reformed covenant theology that the attempts at an ecumenical revival of the covenant concept and of the practice of covenanting--that is to say as a model for the union of separated churches--belong. For example, the Consultation on Church Union, which is concerned with the union of seven separated confessional churches in the USA, has now brought its reflections into a 'covenanting process' and has published a theological basis for it which is at present under discussion in the churches concerned. Similarly in England efforts were made over a number of years to achieve a covenant between various churches on a 10-point basis.

The central motive in all these attempts at an ecumenical revival of the covenant concept is to bring the churches into a mutual commitment to one another binding them together in their common life. It is not such a remote analogy then to compare this with the process of undertaking the binding obligations of common life entered into by two human beings through the marriage bond. In this sense of binding mutual commitment, the covenant concept has of course been present from the very beginning of the World Council of Churches. Few may still remember that the message of the First Assembly of the WCC explicitly incorporated this concept, which can only be discovered by consulting the English version of the message. It reads: "Here at Amsterdam we have committed ourselves afresh to him and have covenanted with one another in constituting this World Council of Churches. We intend to stay together." In the German version the keyword 'covenant' does not appear, probably because it was foreign to the translators: "In Amsterdam we have received a solemn commitment afresh from him and thereby from one another and that is why we have formed this World Council of Churches. We have the firm intention to stay together." Something of the obligatory character of the covenant has been carried over into "the firm intention to stay together", where the English merely says soberly: "We intend to stay together". This idea of an obligation already entered into, undertaken from the start with the founding of the World Council of Churches, was referred to 13 years later at the WCC Third Assembly in New Delhi in describing the unity the churches are seeking together as a "fully committed fellowship". This term occurs again of course in the theme of the present paper.

From all these references, then, it is also clear that the covenant concept in these contexts is seldom developed in detail or defined specifically in terms of biblical theology. Rather, it is taken for granted as if it were familiar.

However, in recent years another idea has become more important than reference to the biblical concept of covenanting, namely the rediscovery of the conciliar practice of the ancient church as a vital form of achieving committed fellowship between the churches. And so, in 1975 at the WCC Assembly in Nairobi, the earlier vision of unity as a committed fellowship of all in each place was completed by the idea of a conciliar fellowship of united local churches.

These two lines of tradition, that of covenanting or remembrance of the established covenant on the one hand, and that of conciliar fellowship on the other, are now interwoven in the invitation of the Vancouver Assembly. This in fact speaks of a "conciliar process of joint commitment (covenant)". No clear distinction or demarcation is now made between what the covenant concept can achieve and what remembrance of the conciliar practice of the ancient church might achieve. It is simply taken for granted that there can be more or less a convergence between the Reformed covenanting tradition and practice and the Orthodox-Catholic conciliar tradition and practice of the ancient church. That was and still is a bold assumption; precisely for that reason the linking of the two lines of tradition by the Vancouver Assembly has occasioned various misunderstandings, confusions and queries. Those confusions were increased even further by Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker's call for a peace council, which was adopted by the Kirchentag (Evangelical Church Congress).

I do not want to go into details here about these possible misunderstandings and subsequent clarifications. Rather, I want to hold on to the main emphasis of the theme and continue to deal with the keyword 'covenanting'. Moreover, we note that in the meantime talk of an ecumenical peace council has been dropped, with good reason, and consequently should not delay us further for the moment in the particular form it was given at the Düsseldorf Kirchentag. I should however like to retain the central idea which lies behind all these attempted formulations, namely that of setting in motion a process aimed at an act of solemn self-commitment by the churches, the core of which would be responsibility for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. So much, then, for preliminary agreement about what we are talking about.

II

Our second question now arises: are we talking about 'covenanting' or about 'covenant renewal'? As I have already noted, it is remarkable that in the phrases where the terms 'covenant' and 'covenanting' occur, their meaning is taken for granted as a matter of course and their theological content assumed to be known. Perhaps that strikes us particularly in our church and social context, for we are more accustomed to a secularized and colourless use of the word 'Bund' (covenant), in the sense of 'federation'. Thus, the Evangelical Church in Germany is a federation of confessionally different churches. Until now, unfortunately, it has not been able to profess itself to be really a church. The churches in the German Democratic Republic have formed a united Evangelical Church from such a federation which therefore remains simply an association.

One can only hope therefore that the 'covenant' in question signifies something like an 'alliance' (Bündnis). This, too, is quite a current term in German, and brings out more strongly the common determination, the purposefulness of joint action as well as the resolve to pursue a common goal with mutual support and in mutual solidarity. A federation does not necessarily have a purpose in view which it would wish to realize and to the achievement of which the various members mutually commit themselves. Against this background, then, there is probably a certain amount of scepticism amongst us in regard to the attempt to renew the biblical idea of covenant in this connection as an expression of special commitment and resolve. At all events, in our Protestant national church context it prompts a certain attitude of reserve. For here it is still the case that a church sees itself as a public church, charged with announcing God's unconditional promise of grace for all human beings, rather than representing a covenant of determined Christians. Of course we know that faith and the promise of new life in Jesus Christ must take concrete form in discipleship, and of course we live by the power of the newly instituted covenant in Christ which we renew in each celebration of the Lord's Supper.

This scepticism about the employment in our language of these keywords is increased if we undertake a rather more precise theological and biblical definition of what is meant by covenant and covenanting. We then discover that in biblical testimony, 'covenant' primarily and above all denotes God's covenant with Israel established one-sidedly by him; in other words, there is no question here of mutual commitment between equal partners. The Old Testament also knows about covenanting between partners on an equal footing. The covenant established by God however is God's one-sided offer to a small, oppressed people in need of protection who, as it were, had nothing to offer in return. God's covenant promise is an invitation to the people to entrust themselves to his faithfulness, to his covenant, to his justice, to enter into the domain of peace, shalom, revealed by him. Israel kept his covenant and renewed it at regular intervals, probably every seven years, on the occasion of the special sabbatical year. Most of the passages concerning God's covenant with Israel are texts that belong to the liturgy of such covenant renewal, for example the great final chapter of the Book of Joshua (Joshua 24), and also the final chapters of Deuteronomy. In fact, the whole of Deuteronomy, the last book of the Pentateuch, is as it were the record of a great covenant renewal, probably connected with King Josiah's reform of the cult.

It is perhaps still possible to recognize some essential elements of that liturgy of covenant renewal. Heino Falcke and Günther Reese have attempted to work them out in Aufsätze in der Jungen Kirche (Essays in the Young Church). I list them briefly. First comes a remembrance of God's deeds, the anamnesis. This remembrance plays a central role in Israel's worship, for it is not the nation which establishes that covenant but God, who by his righteous deeds upholds it. Then follows the renewed proclamation of God's will for his people. With this comes the rejection of other gods, the rejection of other loyalties, alliances and confederacies, leading to the people's solemn self-commitment: we will serve this Lord and him alone. At many points it is apparent that, as a solemn act of confirmation of this covenant renewal, a meal was taken in the presence of the Lord. Two aspects seem to me important for our context in this biblical remembrance. The first is that by the invitation into God's covenant, Israel saw itself faced afresh with a fundamental deci-

sion on loyalty to God or to the gods, a decision which the Book of Joshua--and Deuteronomy as well--sharpens to a choice between life and death, between blessing and curse. Nothing less is at stake in the renewal of the covenant. God's covenant tolerates no other alliances, no other securities, no other confederacies beside it.

Secondly, this covenant of God is not a static state of affairs, but rather a living relationship. The covenant is realized, is brought into effect by acting justly. And so, of course, in the Hebrew Bible Torah does not mean law in the sense of normative ordering, but rather instruction for living. We have learnt this afresh and must be willing to be told so again and again by Israel

The Torah is vitally important instruction and not a requirement impossible to fulfil. All covenanting between human beings which serves the defence of justice and peace in the life of society and the community of nations, rests upon this covenant of God, on the life-preserving instruction of his Word. And so the covenant is at the same time a symbol of freely offered reconciliation, --justification by grace alone, as we say in the Reformed tradition.

III

This leads me in the third place to try to define the content signified by this covenanting. I call this a 'covenant for life'. For what is involved is in fact of course a renewal of God's covenant with his people which, according to our faith in Jesus Christ as Israel's Messiah, has been unconditionally extended to all humankind. The deepest meaning of this covenant is the preservation, promotion, maintenance of the life of humankind, of creation, of life in all its fullness. It is in harmony with this understanding of the covenant if the content of covenant renewal is defined as a fresh commitment to acting justly, to the preservation of peace, to caring for the creation. For these three keywords--justice, peace, creation--do not just signify the domains in which the survival of the human race and of the human world is literally at risk. This is not a theatrical, rhetorial exaggeration, as we all know. Biblically these three words are quite closely connected. They are relational concepts and signify those life-promoting, life-preserving relations between God and human beings, between human beings and the world, on which their life depends. Justice, peace and responsible care for God's creation are therefore also the standards applied in prophetical criticism. Reading the prophets Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, we see at once that the treatment of the poor, criticism of military security policy, restoration and renewal of creation by observing God's sabbath--all this is aimed at the preservation and renewal of the covenant instituted by God. And so shalom is the central reality concerned in that covenant: the health, wholeness, and well-being of humanity and creation.

These life-creating and life-preserving relationships referred to in these three central domains are constantly under threat. That too is familiar to the Hebrew Bible, and also to the New Testament. They are threatened by the human abuse of power. The covenant, the ordinances of the covenant, on the other hand, denote the shape and form taken by the shalom offered by God. Consequently covenanting is not, as it might have seemed at the start of our references to the past, simply a method or a particular form of ecumenical strategy for the achievement of justice, peace and the integrity of creation

--a linking of churches among themselves, an association intended through the mobilization of inter-church solidarity to make all resources available for the urgent tasks of justice and peace in our world and a new ordering of our relations with God's creation. That covenant, and the church as the people of the new covenant, is itself rather a visible expression of life issuing from shalom. Covenant renewal, according to original Christian witness, takes place centrally in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Consequently, fellowship in the eucharist is at the same time the archetype of all covenant community as a community of reconciliation, sharing, healing. I recall the Pauline image of the body of Christ, which is particularly important for the concrete shaping of what is meant by conciliar fellowship.

IV

This brings me to the fourth point: covenanting and covenant renewal as a new quality of ecumenical relations between the churches. The invitation of the Vancouver Assembly was at first regarded in most churches, and also, I think, by most participants in the Assembly, as a prophetical reinforcement of the call to active Christian and church responsibility for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Those tasks had of course been part of the ecumenical mission from the beginning; it was not a matter of new expectations, but of a stronger emphasis in view of the extremely urgent threat to the survival of humankind and the world. The idea of covenanting had accordingly been understood as a call to combine our efforts and overcome feelings of powerlessness in face of the overwhelming forces of destruction in our world. On deeper reflection it became clear that it is perhaps a matter not only of a renewed urgent appeal for practical action by the churches, but also a question of their character as churches, as the people of the new covenant.

Justice, peace and the integrity of creation in this case are not only ethical challenges, but actually involve the pattern and common embodiment of the new life bestowed in Jesus Christ through reconciliation with God. For the churches, then, the common human conflicts expressed in the keywords justice, peace and destruction of creation ultimately represent a challenge to them as to the loyalties under which they live. At the same time it raises the question as to whether the ecumenical movement can achieve a form that corresponds to this summons to joint renewal of God's covenant. We know that the survival of humanity is more severely under threat today perhaps than in earlier generations, threatened not only by personal but also by structural abuse of power --political, military, economic, scientific and technological. The churches are implicated in many ways in these power structures which lead to the constant abuse of power. They are imprisoned in loyalties, prisoners in both their thinking and their action. We are all parts of a political structure which considers it cannot do without a system of deterrence. We are parts of an economic structure which considers it cannot renounce increasing prosperity, economic growth and technological progress. In view of these involvements, how can the churches again become capable of renewal and confirmation of the covenant offered by God, and of commitment to instruction that confers God's life and establishes life? We hear on all sides of course the warning to be patient, to be level-headed, to take care not to ask too much of the churches. And that wise advice to be patient is certainly important and must be heeded. At the same time however there is growing realization among us that the time we have is limited. Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker in his Düsseldorf

appeal has provided us with telling phrases and has gone on to strengthen them with further statements in his brochure "Time presses". There is a growing realization among us that time is pressing, that a sort of kairos, the moment of truth, has come for us too and not only for the churches in South Africa.

This growing realization among us is also due to a recognition that in recent years common convictions have grown up between the churches which would make it possible for us not only to speak jointly with greater determination but also to act together. Such convergences in church convictions--on the need to overcome nuclear deterrence systems, on the basic elements of economic justice and responsible care for God's creation--have been put into words but still have to be put into committed action by the churches. Church declarations and initiatives have so far amounted to little more than a church contribution to political problem-solving. Now, as before, we are waiting for others to do something towards a practical solution; we continue to adopt an attitude of wisdom by giving good advice. The invitation to covenant renewal, on the other hand, is something qualitatively different. It amounts to nothing less than a prophetic call to the churches themselves to be converted, to turn away from the powers, the constraints on thinking and the pressure of circumstances, from the spirit, logic and practice of all that hinders us from entering into God's covenant. It amounts to an invitation to turn afresh to the God of life, that is, to turn to the cross of Jesus Christ as the centre, the point where we as churches come together. That was actually what the first great world conference in Stockholm 1925 said: "The closer we come to the cross of Christ, the closer we come to one another." This conversion, this change of heart, this return of the churches to the cross of Jesus Christ, is the basis and presupposition for all convergence in thought and action. It then takes concrete form, for example in the demand that the churches should contribute in their witness, thought and action to overcome the institution of war --expressed by Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker and a number of church declarations which have adopted his theses; that the spirit logic and practice of deterrence be overcome--the Synod of the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the GDR; that the poor and their vital needs be made the criterion of the economic order--the American Catholic bishops in their pastoral letter; the declaration that racialism is a heresy--made not only by the South African Council of Churches but also by the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the World Council of Churches.

We could continue the growing list of convictions we are coming to share. We also know, however, that opinions are divided in the churches over such declarations and demands. Consequently, the new quality brought into our discussions by the idea of covenant renewal is decisive. When we speak of covenanting and covenant renewal, it is no longer primarily a matter of asking other people, those in positions of responsibility in the economy, politics and science, to take the decisive steps, but of solemnly binding ourselves. Covenant renewal concerns the life of the churches themselves, not primarily the world or humanity. Humankind will only listen to what the churches are willing to commit themselves to. And that is in fact listened to! Secondly, unlike the statement of belief (which is perhaps the form more familiar to us) covenant renewal is not an act of demarcation. The purpose of covenant renewal is not to reject those who think differently. Certainly, it has to do with naming the "principalities and powers", or with the repudiation of idols. Its purpose however is the invitation to enter into God's covenant. I am thinking of the end of the Book of Joshua, where Joshua calls on the people to decide

which path they will choose, that of life or that of death, that of God, or that of the gods, and concludes: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." A covenant of that kind remains open for all who are prepared to take this path and who are willing to pay the price. It is open also for those today who do not yet confess the name of God in Jesus Christ. It is open for people of another faith, and it is open above all for our brothers and sisters in Israel. That is why the sign that was set up in Assisi by the Prayer for Peace is so important in this context of renewal of the covenant, which is a covenant for the peoples and not a covenant that excludes.

V

This brings me to my last point, namely a few suggestions for putting these ideas into practice in churches and congregations. I think it has become clear that the perspective of covenant renewal goes beyond the previous pattern of the ecumenical movement on all its levels, and why it does so. It presents at least as much of a challenge to existing ecumenical agencies as to the churches. Here the call to unity of the churches coincides with the call to accept the challenge on behalf of justice, peace and the integrity of creation in fulfilment of the will of God. Nor is it a matter for church institutions only, but a summons and invitation to the whole people of God. The prophets, the church institutional representatives, may go before--think of Joshua, David, Josiah--but without the agreement, the AMEN of the people, the covenant renewal is not accomplished. It is of course understandable that this comprehensive perspective may give rise to uncertainty about the concrete steps it implies. Such uncertainty did in fact clearly surface in the recent discussions at the WCC Central Committee. I do not think that should be any reason for us to adopt an attitude of superiority, but should simply make us admit that this challenge puts us all in a position where we do not know where to begin or which way to turn, but where we all have to learn afresh.

A few possible directions are recognizable. I shall list them:

1. The process already under way in connection with these keywords should include all Christian churches. For the World Council of Churches it is clear that the basis of its memberhip is too narrow to support this invitation. From the start therefore there has been a clear intention to draw the Roman Catholic Church into this process, and also those Evangelical churches and communities which do not belong to the WCC. This is now linked with the idea of a convocation to be supported by as many churches as possible. This appeal was renewed by the WCC Central Committee at its January 1987 meeting in Geneva. It is still not yet clear how churches outside the membership of the WCC will respond to it. The Roman Catholic Church is engaged in very thorough discussion with the WCC, and I hope that the favourable signs that have been noted may very soon be translated into joint action. Important to my mind in this connection are the decisions of the last Pre-conciliar Conference in preparation for a Pan-Orthodox Synod held last November in Chambésy, and also the major resolution of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, especially on the urgent questions of peace. All these are very important contributions to this newly-initiated process between the churches.

2. An ecumenical world assembly is planned for 1990 as a decisive focal point for the process. The character and precise aim of a world meeting of that kind are still under discussion. It is quite obvious that it is not enough

simply to hold yet another worldwide ecumenical conference with addresses by experts, working groups, numerous judicious reports and recommendations laid before the churches but which do not really bind them to anything. It ought to be a gathering which, by its composition, style of work and way of speaking, declares the highest degree of obligation and mutual commitment - the highest degree of which the churches are now capable. That alone will do justice to the idea of a covenant renewal.

3. It is therefore essential that such an assembly should really become a focal point and not an isolated spot somewhere in the ecumenical landscape, without a past or a future. It must be the culmination of a preliminary process in all our churches of joint covenant renewal, of entry into God's covenant. The Vancouver Assembly deliberately said that this should take place at all levels of church life, from congregations and church regions, from various groups and networks formed among them, up to church structures on the national level. For us here, particular weight attaches to the proposed assembly of churches of the northern hemisphere. These churches are in fact placed in a common situation characterized by nuclear threat, destruction of the environment and the pressing challenge of our co-responsibility for absolute poverty in the third world. The Conference of European Churches has undertaken this task and is in close contact and discussion with the Council of Catholic Bishops' Conferences in Europe. Preparations have begun for such an assembly to be held in 1989.

4. What is to be seen here in the Federal Republic of Germany? Once again a few pointers, most of which will be familiar to you. Stimuli from the Vancouver Assembly, reinforced by the appeal for a council expressed by the Düsseldorf Kirchentag, set up a great wave of response in churches and congregations. This movement is continuing. It is directed now within the Kirchentag framework towards the next Kirchentag in Frankfurt, which will be strongly marked by this theme.

5. Since 1986 the Evangelical Church in Germany has had a small working group of its own to coordinate the various initiatives in the Evangelical Church and its member churches. Those involved in the various ecumenical initiatives also belong to that working group. As part of the bibliographical material you have also received the yellow brochure with the interim report of this working group; you may perhaps have had a chance to glance at it. This report gives a very good summary of the thinking that has been done to date in the Evangelical Church in Germany, as does the handbook prepared at the request of the Kirchentag committee. One element in that thinking is the plan for a national forum for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. The Evangelical Church in Germany, as most of you will know, has requested the Council of Christian Churches in the FRG and West Berlin to support the establishment of the national forum. There are similar plans in the churches in the GDR. There, as in the FRG, the form and extent of Roman Catholic participation has not yet been finally stated.

6. There is an extensive coalition of local ecumenical groups of the most varied sort. Many of these groups came together in the context of the peace movement in the early Eighties and have now directed their joint work towards this process. This has been helped along by two larger ecumenical conferences which are now linked with the name of the little town of Siegen: Siegen I and Siegen II. The second Siegen conference adopted the

text of an invitation to a covenant manifesto with a list of elementary personal undertakings as a proposed focal point. Meanwhile a joint bureau has been set up with an information service which aims at linking up collaboration and contacts as closely as possible. Efforts are being made to work out the content of the relevant theological and factual themes. In other words, there are plenty of ways of approach waiting to be followed up.

7. On the congregational level all kinds of encouraging attempts have been made to introduce these questions into partnership relations with churches for example in the GDR, the Netherlands, Britain, the USA or elsewhere overseas. For it is clear that the idea of ecumenical covenanting draws life from being put into practice in the relationship between churches and congregations in different places. A concrete example is the attempted covenanting between congregations in the FRG and congregations in South Africa threatened with resettlement. Something might be learnt from this experience for the ecumenical process.

8. In many places, ways in which members of the Christian congregation might be brought into the process have been tried out. I think it important here to point not only to the efforts being made in youth work, but in particular to those being undertaken by women in connection with the Ecumenical Forum of Christian women in Europe. In the Westphalian Church and, thanks to its example, in other Evangelical regional churches, a concrete initiative has been taken towards seeking reconciliation with the Soviet Union as a concrete contribution in the European area to the conciliar process leading to convenanting. The Bavarian regional church has reported a number of initiatives in connection with the Peace Decade which have grown out of local experiences. Probably similar things have happened in many other German regional churches which are not known to me, but which might and should be mentioned in our discussion. I shall refer only to a little experiment that we in the Westphalian context have started in the form of regular ecumenical evening prayers for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, in an attempt to create a focal point with a very simple liturgical setting, which may at the same time serve as a basis for the necessary serious exchanges and joint activities.

The call to covenant renewal has a prophetic quality in face of the urgent questions of our time. It is also a reminder of God's promise which outlasts all our conflicts and storms, and is thus the inexhaustible wellspring of hope for an ecumenical movement uncertain of its vocation and its vision.

Acceptance of this call to covenant renewal must not develop into yet another source of pressure to achieve spiritual, political or ecumenical success. What counts are not the clever strategies, planning of conferences and drafting of documents. What ultimately counts is our wholly personal willingness for ever-renewed conversion to the already established covenant. All of us are aware, not least in the ecumenical domain, of the danger of moral and spiritual overloading. That danger can only be overcome if we start from the cross of Jesus Christ as the covenant sign of God's covenant. At the foot of that cross we can lay aside both our undischarged and perhaps undischargeable obligations, and at the same time renew the covenant.

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Resource Materials 2.2

BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON COVENANT

(This reflection was presented at the JPIC Consultation, Glion, Switzerland, on 7 November 1986 by Dr Kim Yong-Bock, associate director, Graduate Programme for Third-World Church Leaders, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Seoul, Korea)

Preface

The stories of the covenant in the Bible are those of the relationship between God and the people of God, between God and the created. These stories permeate the entire biblical books. Here we cannot deal with all the biblical references to covenant in detail, but we will select those references that are salient and pivotal to our concern.

In the first place the term covenant (Berith in Hebrew and Diatheke in Greek) was used very widely in biblical times and in the surrounding world of the biblical road. It meant a variety of relationships and treaties between social groups, such as kingdoms and tribes, as well as relations between leaders and peoples. The types of relations varied very widely according to the partners involved and according to the circumstances.

We are not interested in the mere analyses of codes of covenants that appear in the Bible; but we are interested in the dynamic movement of covenanting and renewing of the covenant between God and the people and the creation on the one hand. We are not interested in the sheer spiritualization of the covenant on the other, but we are interested in the historical movements as well as theological dynamics of the covenant.

What is the reality of the covenant in the Bible? To answer this question, we propose to go to the unfolding stories of covenanting in the Bible before we jump to conceptualize it by comparing it with the concepts of covenanting in the surrounding world of biblical times. The comparison has been a practice of the biblical scholarship but with a limited enlightenment on the nature of the biblical covenant, for it tended to concentrate on the formalistic aspects of the covenant. Going to the stories of the biblical covenants means first of all to emphasize the covenant partners who decide the form and content of the covenant, rather than abstract conceptualization or notion of the covenant.

Secondly, the stories of the covenant in the Bible include the historical context of the covenant as an integral part of the covenant, not taking it out of the context as it usually happens in the conceptualization.

For covenanting to be regarded as the dynamic relation of God to the people and creation, it should be seen in the context of the movement of the people of God, such as the Hebrew slaves made an exodus out of Egypt to Canaan. Therefore, it involves the unfolding stories of God's movement with the people and creation. The codified covenants are merely frozen, concrete manifestations of the covenant between God and his people in different historical contexts.

Stories of the Covenant

We may begin with the covenant at Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb, which is regarded as the most pragmatic in the Old Testament, if not oldest written covenant tradition in the Old Testament. It is sometimes called Sinai Covenant or Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 19:3, 24:14, or 21:1, 23:33). The background of this covenant is the Exodus of the Hebrew slaves from the rule of the Egyptian Pharaoh. The concrete context is said to be the early tribal setting of Israel. Yahweh is the God who makes a covenant with the Hebrews who are forming and formed the confederacy of the Israeli tribal communities in ancient Palestine. There are various developments of this Mosaic Covenant in the Pentateuch, such as in Deuteronomy 5 and 12:26, and Leviticus 25. The most salient portion is the passage of Exodus 21:1-11 where the rights of the Hebrew slaves are stipulated, and this is expansively interpreted in Leviticus 25. This passage represents the core spirit of the covenant code, that is, the protection of the rights of the slaves to be liberated in the seventh year. This is the very protection of the rights of the 'poor' as the core content of the covenant between God and the Hebrew slaves, who are the people of God.

"In the seventh year, he (the Hebrew slave) may leave; he shall be free, with no compensation to pay" (Ex. 21:8).

"...he (the master) has not the right to sell her to foreigners, thus treating her unjustly" (Ex. 21:8).

This covenant code is not merely to treat the Hebrew slaves humanely; but rather to cut the vicious chain of enslavement as it happened in the Exodus event.

In the Deuteronomic version, the Exodus former covenant is not only presupposed, but the content of the covenant became explicit: "Let there be no poor among you..." (Deut. 15:4). "In the seventh year you must set him free, and in setting him free you must not let him go empty-handed. You must make him a generous provision" ... "Thus the covenant is to protect the Hebrew slaves, that is the poor, who are the people of God. It is protective measures of the weak" (Deut. 23:16-25, Deut. 24:5-22).

According to a Korean Old Testament scholar, In Suk Suh, the heart of the law is to protect the rights of the poor. The socio-economic security of the Hebrew slaves that has been suppressed in Egypt had to be secured in the covenant with Yahweh. This is the central concern of the law in the Pentateuch.

In the community of the people of God who are in covenant with God, there can be no possibility of enslaving of the Hebrew, that is, the poor. The covenant

code is the safeguard against the enslavement of the people of God and against their socio-economic insecurity from within and without.

The Story of the Broken Covenant

The establishment of the kingdom from the tribal confederacy has been viewed negatively from the point of view of the Mosaic Covenant. The description of the monarchy in 1 Samuel 8:10-18 is the case in point.

"...he (the king) will take your sons and assign them to his chariotry and cavalry, and they will run in front of his chariot. ... he will make them plough his plough land... He will also take your daughters as performers, cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields, of your vineyards and olive groves and give them to his officials. ...and you yourselves will become slaves" (1 Sam. 8:11-18). This is the exact description of the enslavement of the Hebrews under the Egyptian Pharaoh.

The Deuteronomic historians are generally critical of the power of the kings who violate the covenant, just as the prophetic movement is to denounce and resist the abuse of the power of the kings against the poor and weak. The classical case of the broken covenant is that of the reign of King Ahab who took the vineyard of Naboth (1 Kings 21) by force and murdering. King Ahab followed the way of Jezebel, who said: "I will get you the vineyard of Naboth of Jezreel myself." This is the way of the despot, and "Ahab heard that Naboth was dead (killed), he got up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth of Jezreel and took possession of it." The land was prohibited to be sold or transferred according to the Covenant Code (Num. 31:9, Deut. 29:19).

Even King David was rebuked by the prophet Nathan about his violation of the covenant to protect the poor and weak (2 Samuel 12). Nathan's rebuke is to do with the protection of the weak and the poor.

To a great extent the kingship of Israel was continuous with the political culture of the surrounding kingdom, which is regarded as religious legitimation of "Oriental Despotism" where the king is divine. To this extent the establishment of the kingdom was the violation of the covenant with Yahweh. Jezebel in the reign of King Ahab is the most perfect example of the case that is, Baalism is a political religion that absolutizes the political power of the king.

The Story of the Davidic Covenant

The Davidic Covenant appears in 2 Samuel 7. The making of David leader of the people of God is to protect them so that no power can oppress them from within and from without. David becomes the servant of Yahweh, who is to see it that the covenant is kept.

Therefore, the Davidic Covenant is not only the covenant with God, but also with the people of Israel (2 Samuel 5:1-5). This is what some call a double covenant, that is, David's covenant with God and the people of God. David is accountable to God and to the people. The content of the covenant is the one and same to protect the people from oppression and exploitation.

What is meant was that there was a 'mutation' of the kingship in the history of Israeli politics. The king was never divine or absolute. He is neither the

legislator nor one above the law. He is subject to the laws of God such as the covenant code or its variations. In this case the king is the administrator and judge who protects the rights of the poor and weak in the obedience to Yahweh; and he is the protector of the poor. Thus the Mosaic Covenant has its primacy over the Davidic Covenant. This leads us to conclude that there is a fundamental difference between the political authority of the 'oriental despots' and the Davidic monarchs. In the first case the political authority is divine, absolute and arbitrary, and therefore the law is the expression of the will and power of the political rule; and in the second case the political authority is subject to the covenant with Yahweh and the people and its legal manifestations, and therefore it can never be divine, absolute and arbitary; the covenant law is supreme, above political authority. Here again the protection of the people and their rights from exploitation and oppression is the core content of the covenant and its legal manifestations in all relations--social, political and international.

The Story of David the Messiah in the Covenant

The Davidic Covenant becomes very significant in the international context and post-monarchic period, when the people of Israel are threatened by empires such as Assyria, Babylon and Egypt in terms of their socio-economic security and religious identity. In this situation the people of God sought to maintain or to re-establish the model of Davidic kingship in its pristine form, in the form of the restoration of the Messianic reign.

In such a situation, the basic social framework to enforce the covenant socially and religiously had been destroyed in the exitic or colonial existence. Even when the people of Israel had not yet been completely dominated by the foreign powers, often the international politico-religious influence had been powerful to underminde the covenant framework of the community of the people of God.

Therefore, prophets argued very fiercely against international alliances for security, for they feared that such alliances would subvert the foundation of the covenant due to the encroachment of the political culture of the 'Oriental Despotism'.

The Davidic Covenant and Davidic Messiah became important when the social and political foundation for the Mosaic Covenant broke down due to exile or colonialism. The restoration of the Davidic kingdom was hoped to secure the foundation of the covenant, that is, the framework of justice and peace of God for the people of Israel. Here again the protection of the poor and oppressed is the crux of the matter, for the Messianic kingdom will establish the justice of God for the people. This is manifested in the vision of the Messianic kingdom in Isaiah 11, and in other manifold messianic visions. This is the fundamental basis of shalom for the people of God.

The Messianic King is depicted as follows: He does not judge by appearances, he gives no verdict on hearsay, but he judges the wretched with integrity, and with equity gives a verdict for the poor of the land. His word is a rod that strikes the ruthless, his sentences bring death to the wicked (Isaiah 11:3-4). This is the King in covenant with Yahweh.

The Messianic King is set over against the kings of Assyria and Babylonia and the Egyptian empire. They are depicted as a beast in the jungle: "...its roar

is the roar of a lioness, like a lion cub it roars, it growls and seizes its prey, and no one can snatch it back" (Isaiah 6:29).

Yahweh is against these kings, foreign or domestic, and pronounces woe to them: "Woe to the legislators of infamous laws, to those who issue tyrannical decrees, who refuse justice to the unfortunate and cheat the poor among my people of their rights, who make widows their prey and rob the orphan" (Isaiah 10:1-2).

In contrast, the Davidic Messiah repeatedly appears in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah as the just King in the covenant framework. "A king reigns by integrity and princes rule by law; each is like a shelter from the wind, a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in dry places, like the shade of a great rock in a thirsty land" (Isaiah 32:1-2).

This King is the covenanted King by Yahweh with the people of Israel: "With you I will make an everlasting covenant out of the favours promised to David. See, I have made of you a witness to the people, a leader, a master of nations" (Isaiah 55:3-4).

In short, the Davidic Covenant is a development in the monarchic history, and it is further developed as a promised Messianic Covenant in the context of tribulations of the people of God under the dominations of the empire. Here again justice to the poor is the core of the covenantal developments.

The Story of the New Covenant

The story of the New Covenant is the story of the renewal and restoration of the old, terminated or broken covenants; and often the old covenants are outdated or expired or broken. This necessitates a new covenant.

However, the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is written in the heart of the Israeli people. It is not confined to the written code like the covenant code that has risen around the Sinai tradition. It seems that the basic institutional framework of the covenant had been undermined or broken so that the coded covenant does not faithfully represent a faithful relationship between God and the people. However, the New Covenant is integral and consistent with the Mosaic Covenant in its basic content, that is, the protection of the poor and oppressed.

The New Covenant, which the prophet Jeremiah enunciates, seems to lead to a radical renewal of the covenant. "See, the days are coming (it is Yahweh who speaks) when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel (and the House of Judah), but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. They broke the covenant of mine. ... Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it in their hearts. Then I will be their God and they will be my people" (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

This renewal of the covenant, realized deep in the heart of the people, overcame the limits and shortcomings of the codified laws and of the institutionalized mediation process, religious or political, of the covenant relationship between God and his people. Legal institutions, religious practices and political power structures could not mediate faithful covenant relationships be-

tween God and his people; rather, they were used to undermine and break the covenant by the people. Thus the radical and immediate relation of the New Covenant must have been regained between God and his people. Here one should not interpret the New Covenant in a 'spiritualized' way; rather, it must be understood as a far more radically historical than an institutionalized covenant.

Another story of a new covenant is found in Ezekiel 11:15-21, which is a promise of God to the exiled people of God. This is a promise and hope for the restoration and re-establishment of the covenant community and for a new spirit and new heart as the subject of the covenant, that is, the justice of God for the security of the people in exile and after their return.

"I will bring you all back from the countries where you have been scattered and I will give you the land of Israel. ... I will give them a single heart and I will put a new spirit in them; I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh instead, so that they may keep my laws and respect my observances and put them into practice. Then they shall be my people and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

Here in the exiled community the aspiration and mission of their future is dependent upon a new covenant, promised by God. In the 34th chapter of Ezekiel there is a radical renewal of Yahweh's relation to his people. The intermediaries, political and religious leaders (shepherds) are rejected and the immediate relation between God and his people is envisioned: "I am going to look after my flock myself. ... I shall be a true shepherd to them" (Ezekiel 34: 1-31). Although reference to David is made, the whole chapter excludes false intermediaries of the covenant between God and his people, and God's direct covenant with his people is envisioned. These are the dynamics of the New Covenant.

The Story of the New Covenant in the New Testament

We have chosen to read the story of the New Covenant in the New Testament and with particular reference to Jesus as the continuation of the unfolding story of the covenant in the Old Testament. The covenant is radically fulfilled as the New Covenant in the life and work, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The New Covenant or new commandment for Jesus is not only against the Roman colonial justice and the order of Pax Romana, but also the codified Judaism that served the religious establishment, which is in symbiosis with the Roman authority as is manifested in the trial and execution of Jesus on the cross.

The work of Jesus should be seen in terms of the establishment of the New Covenant in which Jesus is the true friend of the poor. His relations with the ochlos (Minjung) is not accidental, but clearly in the framework of unconditional love for the neighbour, which is the fulfilment of the New Covenant. (See: Prof. Ahn Byung's misc. writings on the subject.)

In the life and work of Jesus the New Covenant is radically manifest. Jesus witnesses to unconditional love of God for his people, particularly the witness to the poor. He views the second part of the great commandment (love your neighbour) in the crux of the covenant to determine the reality of the first part of the great commandment. His Galilean ministry is that of radical love

of the ὄχλος (Mark 1:7). He became the true friend of sinners (Mark 2:15-17). In conversation Jesus told a rich young man that the perfection of the covenant is determined by his property relations with the poor: "Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor...; then come and follow me" (Mark 10:17-22). Here the real character of the New Covenant must be understood in Galilean political socio-economic context as well as in the context of Judeo religious realities. The situation was indeed that of a broken covenant.

The power of the Roman Empire and the "colonial" or "semi-colonial" administration of Herod and Pontius Pilate has to be concretely understood as the real historical context of the New Covenant of Jesus. Otherwise, the abstract spiritualization of the covenant will creep in, as has been the case. The story of the Roman Empire is the story of the breaking of the covenant in continuation.

In the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom of God and related realities, the poor, the weak and the oppressed take the most prominent position as is examplified in Luke 4:18-19. "How happy are you who are hungry now: you shall be satisfied. Happy you who weep now: you shall laugh" (Luke 6:20-21). These and similar messages are perfectly clear and intelligible, seen in the context of the covenant.

In the relations with the poor and the sinners Jesus unmistakably witnesses the reality of the New Covenant whose horizon became all inclusive and whose focus is the poor and the oppressed.

Then the institution of the eucharist is the most explicit and concrete manifestation of the New Covenant (Luke 18:18-23). The Lord's Supper is thus the very core of the new covenant community (1 Corinthians 11:17-34), as viewed by St Paul.

The New Covenant, manifest in the Last Supper, is the culmination of the story of the covenant, which is realized through the crucifixion of Jesus: his body and blood. There has been a tendency in the history of the church to neutralize, if not break, the radical nature of the New Covenant through spiritualizing, religiously interpreting and thereby ignoring socio-economic and political reality of the New Covenant in the Lord's Supper.

The immediate context is the political power of Pontius Pilate, which is the extension of the Roman Empire and the religious authorities of high priests and other religious leaders who are the breakers of the covenant.

We cannot dehistorize this New Covenant when we consider it in the context of the unfolding stories of covenants in the Old Testament and the New Testament, and of the life, work and teachings of Jesus. The prophetic movement and priestly movement of sacrifices are fundamentally the restoration of covenant of the people of God with their God. The early Christian community of the New Covenant is fundamentally characterized by the koinonia, unconditional sharing of love as is manifested in Acts 2, 4 and 5. We should be weary of 'abstract spiritualization' of the New Covenant.

The configuration of the covenant community in the early church is manifest in socio-economic terms, that is, sharing of the economic resources in such a way that there were no poverty-stricken and hungry (Acts 2, 4 and 5).

Paul explicates the New Covenant very clearly in Galatians 3, 4 and 5 where the new community experiences social and spiritual freedom from slavery. Here, once again, the protection and freedom of the slave is the crux of the matter.

In the Letter to the Galatians (3, 4 and 5) Paul discusses the Old Covenant of the Law and the New Covenant of the Spirit or Love or Freedom. The covenantal frame is unmistakably in his reference to Abraham, Hagar and Sarah, and the law. Therefore, being regarded as just and righteous before God by faith is a restoration of the faithful relations with God, and the community of the faithful become the new covenant community of 'free men'--free persons--out of slavery.

In this New Covenant community there is no order that separates the poor from the rich, the slave from the master, the foolish from the wise, the powerless from the powerful, or the gentiles from the Jews. The dynamics of this New Covenant community had indeed been undermining the order of the Pax Romana of the Roman Empire. Hence persecution!

The socio-economic security of the people of God is closely related to the integrity of the land, the earth and all the living creatures. Therefore, it is natural to read and understand that God's covenant with his people is inclusive of the earth as the integral covenant partner. In the context of the cosmic domination of the empires, the claim of the covenant of God with his people has to include the earth, which is the garden in the rule (Creatorship) of God and which is turned into jungle under the rule of the chaotic powers of the empire.

It is my initial exploration of the biblical stories of the covenant that the Hebrew slaves and the ὄχλος (Minjung) is the primary and central partner of God's covenant. When one loses this focus and primary reference, the question of the peace and integrity of creation is compromised in a very serious way.

My exploration of the stories of the Broken Covenant brings me to the conclusion that the power of the empires, their satellite powers and imitation and religious authorities and other intermediaries of the covenants are usually the real and true covenant relations. And therefore, the renewal, restoration and establishment of a new covenant is to question radically the intermediary structures as well as the outright culprits in breaking the covenant.

The New Covenant between God and the people has radical immediacy, excluding limited and distorted mediation process, political and religious, or radically reforming the mediating structures as is manifest in the Letter to the Hebrews and the Revelation.

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MEDITATION

COVENANT WITH THE EARTH
Hosea 2:18-20

Rev. Ofelia Ortega

I want to confess to you that Hosea has not been one of my favourite prophets, because for many years I felt that his metaphor about the prostitute Gomer was not a fair image in the Old Testament, especially of women.

Nevertheless, today I would say that there is, in biblical terms, a difference between women who are prostitutes and prostitution as a social evil. These are two different realities, and they are treated in a different way in the scriptures. Prostitutes are to some extent protected, whereas prostitution is condemned.

There is a recognition of Rahab and Tamar, and a warm welcome for Gomer, but prostitution itself is a symbol of infidelity to God and a paradigm of all the great perversions of this world. Prostitution is conceived as a social oppression that must be condemned. Some of the Old Testament prophets used the symbol of prostitution to show the connection between prostitution and idolatry, adultery and idolatry. Even in Matthew 21:31-32 we find that the Gospel makes this distinction very clearly: "I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did."

As I came to understand it like this, I reconciled myself with the metaphor used in the book of Hosea, and I can see better its relationship with the whole of creation in our verses of today, because prostitution is one of the most degrading evils of this world and destroys the beauty of God's creation. In the framework of this metaphor Yahweh came with his covenant of love and reconciliation.

"On that day" (v. 16)--the day of the Lord--it is the eschatological hope--"the day of salvation". It is the end of the old order of things and the beginning of the new age.

But this covenant is not between Yahweh and Israel, so we don't have here a renewal of the Sinai Covenant. It is a covenant between Yahweh and the animals, between God and creation, for their benefit. It is a covenant which gives blessings in every dimension of life.

The biblical passage has a very interesting combination--when God and the people are reconciled, when there is a response to this steadfast mercy of God, the covenant has to be extended to improve the quality of life--it is a call to a commitment to build a better world; to work for the restoration of creation and to create an order of peace and security. The covenant here has three aspects: a) I will make a treaty with the beasts of the fields, with the birds of the air and the creeping things of the earth (v. 18a); b) war is to be abolished (v. 18b); and c) security established (v. 18c).

But these are not simply beautiful words to be repeated from the pulpit; the prophet is thinking really of a new order of things on earth.

We need to link this prophecy with the historical reality of the time: It was a time of despair, for the Assyrian King Teglatfalasar II (8th century before Christ) was building up his imperial power and had entered Israel; and with the Assyrian war chariots destroyed the countryside, the harvest and the land; and then the wild beasts had taken over.

But "God sows again the earth" (v. 23) "... and in that day the heavens will have the answer from me, the earth its answer from them--the grain, the wine, the oil, their answer from the earth" (v. 22), and God will sow the land. In Spanish the words are even more beautiful: "Yo sembraré en la tierra" (v.23). Hosea is thinking of a complete restoration of the land; "the people" who are to return after Teglatfalasar in the year 733 are the peasants returning to their own land, to cultivate their land again (we must not forget that Hosea was from the countryside, a peasant in contact with the earth). It is not only that God has mercy and compassion; Yahweh is acting in history, and God's compassion has meaning in the historical reality. At the end of this biblical passage we see this reciprocal love which embraces a complete and holistic restoration of our world (creation, land, earth) with very clear historical demands for us today. It is a call to make a covenant and to struggle against all the forces that destroy creation; all the forces that bring war and militarization instead of peace and reconciliation.

A covenant with the people who are excluded from the benefits of creation, a covenant with the women who are transplanted from their own land to be prostitutes; a covenant for a better world: Only then, said Yahweh, "you will be my people ... and you will know me." (v. 23).

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COVENANT WITH THE POOR

Levi Oracion

Covenanting is a distinctly biblical act. It refers to God's act of binding himself with Israel in a relationship whereby God assures Israel of care, providence and blessing and, in turn, demands obedience, faithfulness, and worship. On the surface, it appears a rather arbitrary and high-handed act on the part of God, for no reason is given why God singled out Israel among the great many nations God could choose from. On a closer look we see that Israel, in God's words, was not a "people" before its divine election. It appears fairly clear now according to Bible scholars that, at the time of the Exodus, Israel was a motley group of disenfranchized tribes that were completely under the mercy of their Egyptian rulers. From the human perspective it is monstrously irrational that God who embodies in his being all that is ultimate in power, beauty, judgment and goodness should break away from his heavenly abode and his ultimate status and seek out and ally himself with a weak, ugly and unruly bunch of men and women who could not even make it on their own. The Pharaoh looked at him in disdain, and that was why the Lord God had to use various coercive measures to obtain the release of his slaves. It is already difficult to understand why God should even venture out of his eternal state of blessedness and intrude himself into the never-ending squabble of power-mad kings, but for him to bind himself in a holy covenant with the refuse of the earth is the height of folly.

But herein is the crux of the matter. God's act of binding himself with Israel who symbolized the dregs of humanity at that particular historial era reveals the divine nature, the central thrust of the authentic life in an unjust and hate-ridden world, and a new theological-political perspective for the transformation of human beings and society.

1. A revelation of who is God

There is a powerful tendency on the part of human beings to identify God with the high and the mighty of the earth--so concretely given evidence by the fact that the official high priests of organized religions belong almost always to the establishment of society. God is always who is eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, that he stands as the logical contradiction of human beings who are relegated to the bottom of the heap of

society. God's residence is high up in the heavens, emperors and kings rule by his authority, conquerors conquer by his might, the rich and powerful are the stewards of God's creation, and the learned acquire knowledge by God's light. But the God who bound Israel into a covenant relationship dramatically breaks away from this ingrained human tendency, scorns the high and the mighty, and upsets their world by choosing for a partner a weak, quarrelsome and fickle bunch of tribes. What a strange God this is! This divine desire to reach out first to those who are nothing, to identify himself with them and take up their cause is a consistent note in the biblical portrayal of God from Genesis all the way to the Revelation. God is the power who comes to subvert structures of oppression, exploitation and domination.

Why the poor and the oppressed? Does God have a distorted sense of value that loves to wallow in the uncultured and barbaric ways of the poor and the ignorant? Is he devoid of ethical sense that he would much rather dwell with the immoral and uncouth rabble of society than with those who strive to preserve law and order in society? No, God goes to the succour of the poor not because of any quality they have in themselves, but because they have been unjustly dealt with by those who control the power structures of society.

In the mind of God, poverty is a definite sign of injustice. If poverty was merely a result of human indolence, God's judgment would not have been on the Pharoah but on the Isrealites themselves as the master did in the parable of the talents. It is clear, however, in the biblical myth of the fall and in the subsequent unfolding of Adam's fallen nature, that his search for security launches him into a quest for power which he uses to exploit and dominate others in the interest of his own security. In turn, this quest for security that gets transmogrified into a brutal exercise of power is spelled out in structures of power and domination. And the result is injustice--massive, systematic, cruel and inhuman.

In the Exodus story it is clear that the Pharaoh and his cohorts felt threatened by the growing number of Israelites, and one way of keeping them completely under control was to disenfranchise them permanently--to keep them as slaves and drill that consciousness into their minds by making their slavery more miserable.

So God in the Bible breaks out of the realm of poesy and fancy and intrudes into human political history and starts a revolution. Deep in the heart God must have a covenant with the creatures he would create even before the act of creation. It must have been a relationship of love, care, mercy and fair dealing in terms of which justice is understood. And it is in the terms of this covenant in the heart of God that he acted when he came to the succour of the Israelites in Egypt.

Justice in the Bible is not defined from a previous thought of essence. It is defined in the context of a covenant relationship where the observance or violation of prescribed duties and obligations constitute acts of justice or injustice. That God should break into human history and involve himself in the struggle of the poor and the oppressed for freedom and justice reveals a covenant relationship he has established himself and all that he would still create before creation. Karl Barth must have sensed

this when he wrote: "Creation is the external basis of the Covenant, wheras Covenant is the internal basis of Creation".

And that covenant is what has come to full and perfect expression in the work and person of Christ. This is no place for a discussion of Christology, but it should be quite enough to indicate its broad outline. Christ exemplified God's love and justice by identifying himself with the poor and the oppressed, by resolutely taking up their cause even unto death, and by revealing that it is through this way of commitment and struggle that God's power for justice and liberation will come both to the poor and their tormentors. Faith in Christ is therefore essentially a covenant relationship with him. But where is Christ? Matthew gives us the answer from the Lord himself: We find him among the poor.

2. This brings us to our second point: God's act of covenanting with Israel reveals the central thrust of the authentic life in an unjust and hate-ridden world.

Christians are always seeking for the authentic life. In the medieval period, Martin Luther's personal search for righteousness led him to the rediscovery of Paul's doctrine of justification of faith. The Reformers and their children have raised this doctrine to the level of a fundamental theological principle, that is, every facet of the Christian life must be interrogated in terms of this doctrine. But how is one to remain faithful to this doctrine in the context of massive and systematic injustice of our time? A literal and purely intellectual appropriation of the doctrine of justification could serve as a defence mechanism to the claims of the poor and the oppressed upon us. After all, to identify ourselves with and take up the cause of the poor refers to very concrete forms of action, or are very oriented works, whereas faith is largely in the dimension of self-understanding. Or isn't it? What faith really means in the biblical sense is to be contracted into a covenant relationship with God whose terms are laid out in and through Christ.

Jesus Christ must be sought for in reality within the context of our historical existence, with the Bible giving us pointers as to where we might find him. Jesus Christ in himself is not a tangible reality; he can only be apprehended where love and justice become fully embodied in actual human life, and that happens when we identify ourselves with and take up the cause of the poor and the oppressed. To have faith in Jesus Christ, then, is to be in covenant with the poor, and believers in Jesus Christ are justified within that covenantal relationship.

Faith is not directed to some god in the heavens or to some spiritualized conception of Christ issuing between the pages of scripture or out of the sacraments, but to the God who was bolted out of the heavenly realm to bind himself through Jesus with the struggles of the poor and the oppressed for justice and freedom. God justifies those who are honest and serious in keeping that covenant! This interpretation of justifications expands the realm of the doctrine beyond the inner recesses of the human soul right into the battlefields of justice and freedom. And the keepers of the covenant are those who do not merely satisfy themselves by bearing the symbols of faith but those who dare to pit the meaning of those symbols against powers and forces that impoverish, enslave, dehumanize and oppress human beings.

But the great tragedy of our time is that a great many well-meaning Christians struggle on the dark and demonic side of the human divide. The cross, the Bible, Jesus Christ himself are made to harmonize with the logic of domination in much the same way that the Sanhedrin sought to uphold, to harmonize the Law and the Sabbath with their economic and political interests; thus a great many of those who bear the name Christian throw their economic and political weight on the side of forces and powers which Christ himself sought to destroy. God is once more being pushed back to this heavenly realm, and Christ is made to identify himself with and take up the cause of the Pharaohs, the Pilate, the Sanhedrins, and the Cesars of this world.

This is why it is so important to insist that to covenant with the poor is not a mere ethical consequence of Christian discipleship, but the central meaning of the Christian life, and part of the process by which we work out our own salvation.

3. The covenant with the poor reveals a new theological perspective which contradicts the fundamental assumptions and values of the old oppressive order. A holistic reading of the Gospels would reveal that Jesus incurred the ire of the Jewish authorities because he broke away from and challenged establishment. His radical attitude towards the Sabbath, his act of forgiving sinners, his acts of healing, and the radicality of his teaching, all served notice to the reigning establishment that its authority is being undermined, which is why the Jewish authorities very early in the ministry of Jesus decided to kill him.

   Jesus' theological and political radicalism are all of a piece with his voluntary covenantal act with the poor whose interests cannot be served under the spiritual-cultural assumptions of the dominant group because these assumptions, though religious in character, are in the main a mere reflection of the interests of the group in power. It is the cultural, moral, religious assumptions and their corresponding socio-economic, politial arrangements that have created the poor, and the power and wealth of the establishment depend so heavily on the exploitation of the poor that it is impossible for them to break out of their misery underming the spiritual and cultural forces responsible for their enslavement.

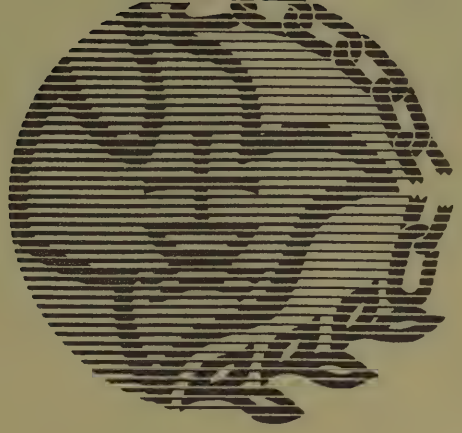
   Jesus brought about a radical reversal of values in Jewish society when he identified himself with the poor and took up their cause for that reversal of values. For that reversal of values lies at the core of his opposition to human oppression and the unjust, oppressive economic and political arrangements it creates. Jesus therefore creates a new logic that weaves a new socio-political process which seeks to preserve and promote the interests of the lowest of the low in society, where the strong, the powerful, and the gifted find their reason for being in serving the interests of those not so abundantly endowed. Enemies are to be loved, greatness is found in service, pride is subverted by humility, selflessness takes the place of self-interest. All stand in contradiction to the logic of exploitation and domination. Of course, one can argue that these qualities are inherent in Jesus' own person and do not belong to the poor as such. One cannot say that Jesus developed these ideas and values only out of his concern for the poor, rather, Jesus was concerned with the poor because of what he was. Nevertheless, the reality of the poor, its

circumstance and vision form a consistent logical whole with the logic of Jesus so that genuine solidarity with the poor should project a vision of society that would be contrary to that of Jesus.

The point at issue is that those who enter into a covenant with the poor cannot remain safely ensconced within the socio-political system where they are because they would be moving by a perspective that undermines it. This is one reason why many Western development programmes could not get anywhere withouy exacerbating the very miserable conditions they were supposed to eliminate.

There are two forms of logic that contradict each other at work in human societies; one arises out of the fallen nature of humankind which we can call the logic of domination, and the other one arises out of the covenantal act with the poor which we may call the logic of the poor. It is the task of those who enter into a convenantal act with the poor to develop this logic and project a political vision in terms of it. What it really involves is a total transformation of humankind and society, and it can be carried out only in the presence of and with the help of the poor.

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION



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A statement adopted by the Caribbean and North American Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, at its annual meeting in Toronto, Canada, 1981

A COVENANT MANIFESTO FOR THE NUCLEAR AGE

OUR HISTORICAL MOMENT

FEARFULLY aware of the threat to life in all its dimensions symbolized by the proliferation of nuclear weapons,
ANXIOUSLY aware of the threat of nature and human life posed by the possibility of nuclear accidents, especially in the wake of the Three Mile Island event, and
PAINFULLY aware of the threat of nuclear confrontation as many of our governments increase defense and national security spending,
WE ARE COMPELLED both to confess our implication in these destructive developments and to give some account of the hope that is within us as Reformed Christians.

OUR JUDEO-CHRISTIAN STORY

To live in covenant relationship with the God of the Old and New Testaments is to affirm the value and dignity of the world, created, sustained and redeemed by that God.
God created the world as a joy to himself and a blessing to all humanity.
God promised our parent, Noah, that he would deal with his creation, not in anger, but in compassion.
God promised our parent, Abraham, that his compassionate power would flow through his descendants as a blessing to all nations.
God promised our parent, Moses, that a people would be created out of those who suffered and sojourned that would incarnate and share God's blessing.
God renewed his promises through our parents, the prophets, to bless the whole creation through justice and well-being.
God fulfilled his promise of blessing in Jesus Christ, our brother and friend. Throughout the history of God's invitation to covenant relationship, and in our own historical moment, people have failed to respond in faithful loyalty to the God who has called and is calling them to work with him in blessing the creation. We are part of those people. Their

failure is our failure. Their ambiguity about the world and its worth is our ambiguity. Their obstruction of blessing for the world is our obstruction. Yet, while we are ambiguous, timid and obstructive, God remains faithful to his covenant of blessing, sealing it with the blood of his Son, Jesus Christ. In Christ and with Christ we experience the value and dignity of this world as blessed by God.
In God's faithfulness to his creation we are grasped by and recognize the ground of the hope that is within us as Reformed Christians.

OUR HOPEFUL RESPONSE

WE DECRY AND CONDEMN the proliferation of nuclear power and pledge ourselves to use every means possible to seek a moratorium on their production and a treaty preventing their use.
WE DECRY AND CONDEMN the justification of and apathy towards the dangers of nuclear power and pledge ourselves to use every means possible to protect the value and dignity of this world which has been given as a blessing from God.
WE DECRY AND CONDEMN the threat to life in all its dimensions symbolized by our nuclear capability and pledge ourselves to struggle to share in God's creative, sustaining and redeeming blessing of this good earth.

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COVENANT FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

A Statement of the Executive Committee of the
World Alliance of Reformed Churches

Introduction

The struggle for peace and justice was a prominent concern of the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Ottawa (17-27 August 1982). As it deals with the general theme, "This is the kingdom, the power and the glory", it was inevitably led to reflect on the forces of hatred, greed and destruction which threaten humanity today. The debate resulted in several statements on peace and justice (Section III, cf. Reformed World 37, 3-4, pp. 64ff., Policy Reference Committee, cf. Reformed World 37, 3-4. pp. 69ff., Special Committee on "Called to Witness to the Gospel Today", pp. 40-47). The concern was again in the centre of attention when we, the newly elected Executive Committee of the Alliance, came together for our first meeting after the General Council (27 February-4 March 1983). On the basis of the affirmations made by the General Council we wish to issue the following call.

1. An imperative of faith

The General Council left no doubt that the commitment to peace and justice is to be understood as a spiritual obligation. It is demanded by Jesus Christ himself. Therefore, issues of peace and justice do not simply belong to the realm of politics and must not be decided exclusively on the grounds of pragmatic 'political wisdom'. The General Council emphatically called on the member churches "to regard the question of peace as not merely a political question but as one that immediately concerns our commitment of the God of peace" (p.64). Living with the Gospel implies a constant struggle for the protection of the life which God provides for all humanity and the entire creation. On the basis of this spiritual commitment the church may be led to contradict established policies of governments and the apparent consensus of society.

2. Weapons of mass destruction and nuclear war

Today, the commitment of peace is of the utmost urgency because we are confronted with weapons whose capacity of destruction can lead to the extinction of life. The world lives under the threat of nuclear war. Nobody can be indifferent to this fact.

The General Council called on the churches to engage in a determined and concerted struggle against nuclear armament. It made clear that we are summoned to this struggle by the Gospel itself. "Insofar as we compromise with evil by supporting the present irrational arms race, we are guilty of disobedience to God and we invite his judgment upon our world. Our attitude towards weapons of mass destruction should be determined by our faith. It is a question of affirming or denying the Gospel itself" (p. 70).

In recent years, several Reformed churches have taken this stand, e.g. the Netherlands Hervormde Kerk. We note that on the issue of nuclear armament a similar consensus is emerging as on the issue of racial discrimination. The Moderamen (Board) of the Reformed churches in the Federal Republic of Germany went a step further by declaring the "no" to nuclear arms to be an issue of status confessionis. "...for us the status confessionis is given with it, because the attitude taken to means of mass destruction has to do with affirming or denying the Gospel itself." Several of us feel the use of the term status confessionis to be inappropriate in this context, but we can accept the statement as a call to renewed witness on this issue. All churches have to see themselves unavoidably challenged to respond to the question of nuclear armament clearly and bindingly as a question of faith and obedience in hearing the scriptures and praying for the guidance of the Spirit.

What does the struggle against nuclear armament imply for the churches? In our judgment it implies

- declaring unambiguously that under no circumstances the use of nuclear weapons of any kind can be justified theologically or morally;

- affirming now that no Christian can in good conscience fight for a country which uses nuclear weapons; the attitude of the churches to issues of peace as they arise today must be governed by this affirmation;

- denouncing the folly of the nuclear arms race which increases the risk of nuclear war and consumes resources vitally needed for overcoming the problems of hunger and poverty in today's world;

- making clear that, in the long run, a secure peace cannot be obtained by the strategy of mutual deterrence; although the equilibrium of forces may prevent war for a limited period and may therefore serve a purpose at this stage, it does not provide the basis for a long-term solution;

- supporting all genuine efforts at diarmament through multilateral as well as bilateral negotiations;

- inviting the governments of our country to take measures which contribute to building up mutual trust, e.g. renouncing the first use of nuclear weapons or undertaking limited unilateral reduction of the nuclear arms arsenal;

- encouraging movements in our country protesting against the production of nuclear arms and interpreting their aspirations and demands to the political authorities.

We are aware of the enormous difficulties in translating such an attitude to nuclear arms into political reality. We recognize and share in these difficulties. On the other hand, we are convinced that only on the basis of a determined stand can the political will to find a way out of the impasse and new solutions grow.

3. Peace and justice

Peace is more than the absence of war. Peace means living together as a community in mutual respect, solidarity and justice. Commitment to peace includes therefore much more than the struggle against nuclear armament. There is today an acute danger of being exclusively concerned with the horrifying vision of a nuclear catastrophe and of overlooking the other forces which threaten humanity --hunger, poverty, exploitation, discrimination, repression, all leading inevitably to the violation of fundamental human rights. Above all, we must not forget the many wars which have been conducted in our time with conventional weapons and have caused the death of millions. Avoiding nuclear conflict, as pressing a task as it is, does not yet mean peace. There is no commitment to peace without an equal commitment to justice. Peace and justice are inseparable. The General Council pointed particularly to two areas where a renewed commitment is required:

- Peace is threatened by the intolerable injustice of hunger, starvation and poverty. While the gap between rich and poor nations is increasing, the readiness of the rich nations for sharing their wealth is diminishing. There seems to be a growing acquiescence with the present situation. A new initiative is needed to break the deadlock (Reformed World, pp. 65 and 70ff.; "Called to Witness to the Gospel Today", pp. 42-44).

- Peace is threatened by discrimination and repression. If the churches are to serve the cause of peace, they need to make their own the cause of human rights. They are summoned by Christ to be present where the dignity of human persons is at stake, especially where fundamental human rights are violated. A movement of protest is required to maintain at least the protection of a minimal core of human rights. As part of this movement the General Council urged the member churches to engage in a campaign against the use of torture (Reformed World, pp. 72-74).

4. A covenant for peace and justice

On the basis of these considerations we call on the member churches of the Alliance to stand together and to renew their commitment to peace and justice. Each church needs to bear witness primarily in its own situation, but more and more we must also learn to witness and act together through concerted efforts. At a time when the struggle for peace and justice meets with increasing resistance and many are tempted to lose heart, we need the witness and encouragement of the churches and Christians of other countries. May the communion in the Alliance increasingly become a source of a common spiritual renewal.

At the same time we dare to propose that all churches which confess Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, whatever their tradition, should form a covenant for peace and justice. Though they still differ on many issues and cannot yet unite as the one Church of Jesus Christ, they all face the same challenges with regard to peace and justice in the present world. They can form a covenant for the particular purpose of a common witness in this field. In order to give visible expression to this covenant, we suggest, under the auspices of the World Council of Churches, the preparation and early summoning of a special ecumenical gathering in which all churches would participate and bear witness to ways of peace and justice.

We know that we cannot determine the course of history. The future is not in our hands. God has his own ways of bringing about his kingdon. But as we pray "your kingdom come", we need to do whatever we can to oppose the destruction of life. As long as we live we are called to be witnesses to God's love for all people and his whole creation.

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COVENANT ON CENTRAL AMERICA

signed by the United States and Central American delegates
to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 1983

Jesus Christ as the Life of the World and we seek to make him incarnate in our regions. As Christians, we are sharing with our sisters and brothers in the United States a new possibility to concretize our commitment to the Life of the World. There have been several conscious and vigorous attempts by people with influence and power to divide us into enemy camps, separating Christians in the U.S. from Christians in Central America and creating barriers among us and with our churches. By means of this decla- ration we state emphatically that we are not divided. We are one in Christ and there is nothing, neither tribulation nor afflictions, nor persecution, nor hunger, nor nakedness, nor danger, nor swords that can separate us from his love.

As a sign of our unity and as an expression of our common faith and our love of Christ, the Prince of Peace who provided justice and is the Lord of Life, we make the following covenant in the presence of Christ, Christians and the churches of the whole world, and as a testimony before all people:

- We will remain united in prayer and in active solidarity at all costs.
- We will remain in constant contact with each other through visits and other interchanges.
- We will serve and nourish by all possible means the victims of war and injustice, serving and protecting the refugees, through our ministries and in generous ecumenical sharing of our resources.
- We will become involved in educational and political activities that will change the present policies of the U.S. in Central America that are based on threat and the use of force, and we will oppose all military intervention by any of the parties involved in the current Central American conflict.
- We will use all available means to serve as agents of justice and reconciliation between Central America and the U.S., promoting and facilitating a process of peaceful negotiation that respects the right to free determination of all involved countries.
- We will make sure that this covenant will be disseminated, studied and adopted by the respective national, regional and local ecclesial organizations.

- We will develop a new pedagogic focus for the life and mission of the church in terms of educational programmes so that the members of our congreations may be better able to understand the profound implications of the situation of injustice and so that our testimony may be more faithful and effective.
- We will establish a communications network among individuals in the U.S. and Central America, exchanging our names so that there will be direct contact among those of us who have signed the covenant, as well as with other Christians in the United States and Central America.
- We will be responsible, individually and collectively, to Christ, the Lord of History and to the universal church, for the fulfilment of this covenant.

We trust in the grace of God. Amen.

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From 5-12 March 1987, representatives from base Christian communities and other ecumenical Christian movements for justice from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America gathered in Sao Paulo, Brazil, for a "Confessing Movement's Seminar on the Christian Faith and Economics". The meeting was sponsored by the WCC/CCPD and LWF. The participants are the first signers of the statement which the conference produced.

This statement, the complete text of which follows, calls for churches, congregations, Christian groups, movements and base communities to join the original signers in declaring that the evil manifestations of the prevailing economic systems must be rejected by Christians in the strongest terms available to them, depending upon their doctrines and traditions (i.e., declaration of heresy or status confessionis).

Churches, Christians and Economic Systems: A Call to Obedient Discipleship

A. We have come to this seminar from Christian communities at the 'edges' (economic peripheries) of societies in various parts of the world. In our countries we participate in popular struggles for life, working together with people from different creeds. From this context, we personally see and experience the reality of poverty, powerlessness and death that are imposed on the majority of the world's people by the economic systems maintained by and serving an extremely powerful minority.

We have again seen that our experiences are confirmed by economic-scientific anaylses which demonstrate that the capitalist system which controls the 'first world' and the 'third world' is the root cause of the poverty and powerlessness of the majority of people.

This prevailing economic system is based on serving the interests of the powerful and the rich and excludes an increasingly large majority of the world's population from satisfying their basic needs.

This leads to alienation of labour, misdirection of capital and misuse and destruction of land.

We therefore regard the following manifestations of the prevailing economic order as a fundamental matter of Christian faith.

Labour

Labour is predominantly seen as a factor of production. In so-called third-world countries we, as workers, produce cars in which we will never drive, build houses in which we will never live and produce food that we will never consume. In all parts of the world we make products which destroy nature and satisfy artificial needs and greed.

This makes work itself empty and meaningless. Workers are reduced to objects in economic life. This is manifested most dramatically in migrant labour which destroys family life. It leads to alienation and to the violation of human dignity and God's intention for men and women to be subjects and co-workers in the ongoing creation.

Capital

The misdirection of capital is clearly manifested in the growing international debt crisis. The people of the indebted countries are not responsible for the creation of this debt which should be considered illegitimate. The debt keeps the 'third-world' economies in bondage and strangulation, enslaving and even killing the poor. High interest rates in the dominant economies of the North are among the factors which lead to unpayable levels of debt service payments for the countries of the South. High military budgets in the U.S. and other industrialized countries are largly responsible for these high interest rates. Thus the high interest rates are serving death in a double way and are therefore even more contrary to the core of our Christian faith in the life-giving God.

In cities in the North, capital speculation leads to urban poverty and deterioration of housing conditions, destroying our families and human communities.

Christians have to reject these situations in which capital gains take priority over the lives of women and men as a form of idolatry.

Land

The misuse and destruction of land as an expression of the lack of respect for life leads to ecological disasters. The highly unequal distribution of land in most parts of the world is the result of the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a few and the robbing of land from the poor and especially from the indigenous people among us.

The prevention to exercise responsible stewardship over creation and the stealing of life-giving resources should be regarded as a sin.

B. In our communities and in this seminar, we have followed a spiritual discipline of Bible reflection and prayer. Together with our suffering sisters and brothers, our communities of faith gather regularly to reread the scriptures and to celebrate our faith. Through this discipline we have learned that our praxis which defends and promotes life, equality, justice and peace against

the powers of death is a form of confession of faith, because we see in it concrete signs of God's kingdom. Through these spiritual disciplines we are enlightened, inspired and empowered in our struggles for liberation.

In particular, our reflections upon our experiences and anlyses in the light of our biblical faith bring us to these conclusions:

1. The prevailing economic systems are in their foundations contrary to the intentions of God's creation, resulting in poverty, injustice, powerlessness and death rather than creating and providing for the basic needs, human rights, democratic empowerment and life for people.

2. Too often the teaching of the Christian faith is misused to support these economic systems, and the structures of the powerful, mainline Western churches are aligned with, reflect, defend, benefit from and are also imprisoned by these systems of death.

3. The God of the Bible identifies with the poor and powerless, and chooses to suffer with them in their struggles for liberation and justice.

4. The people of God are called and empowered to follow Jesus and to identify with the poor and oppressed in their struggle for justice and liberation and to join with others who are not part of the churches and who are committed to and engaged in struggles for liberation and justice.

5. Individual Christians, movements and base communities, as well as the institutional churches are called to constant conversion in all aspects of life and to the praxis for life. This involves working for the creation of alternatives, individually, ecclesially and socio-politically.

C. Many Christians before us have reached these conclusions and have responded to the biblical call to participate in local, national and global struggles for liberation.

However, we believe that a moment of time has been reached for a renewed obedience and a stronger response. Therefore, we have reached the following conclusions:

1. We confirm the statement of the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi, Kenya, 1975, saying that "...while we confess a Christ who frees and unites, the economic structures in which we live tend to enslave to wealth and divide".

2. We recognize that the effect of this systematic economic oppression not only destroys the life and the unity of humankind, but also prevents and destroys the unity of the church.

3. We recognize that attempts to defend these economic systems on the basis of Christian faith are contrary to the Gospel and should be opposed by the churches in the strongest terms available to them (i.e., declaration of heresy, status confessionis, etc.).

4. We recognize that Christians must therefore reject and resist these economic systems.

5. We recognize that churches and individual Christians, in order to be true to Christ's calling, must initiate, encourage and support efforts to create a just, fully participatory economic system that guarantees the right to life for all people as expressed in the right to food, shelter, work, health, dignity and self-determination.

We invite churches, congregations, justice groups and movements, and base communities to join with us in this declaration that rejecting these evil manifestations of the prevailing international economic system is a fundamental requirement of our Christian faith. We also invite all who do so to covenant together in ways that will further justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

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RESISTANCE COMMITMENT AS COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE

made by a group of US clergy and lay leaders

We live in a time when tremendous power, concentrated in the hands of a few, threatens the survival of the human family. We live in a time of scandalous idolatry when faith is bent to the service of the state. In order to "resist the powers of evil" today, to whom do we commit ourselves?

1. We commit ourselves to the God of justice as the only true God. "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Ex. 20:2).

We resist the view that the office of President of the United States, and that of other high government officials, is God-ordained, and therefore above criticism. To equate our faith with national policy is idolatry.

2. We commit ourselves to the God of justice as the only God to be worshiped. "You shall have no other gods to set against me." (Ex. 20:3)

We resist the view that allegiance to our country is the ultimate value of our lives. To equate worshiping God with worship of the nation is idolatry.

3. We commit ourselves to the God of justice as the only God who can claim our loyalty as people of faith. "You shall not make for yourself any graven image ... you shall not bow down to them or worship them." (Ex. 20:4,5)

We resist the view that to serve the nation requires us always to seek profit, exploiting both natural and human resources. To equate serving God with the uncritical affirmation of any economic system is idolatry.

Therefore:

A. We believe that Government has no right to make of itself a god, refusing accountability and viewing itself as the source of our salvation. Without such restraint, racism, sexism, and classism flourish.

Only God's justice has a right to govern us: "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

B. We believe that the Military has no right to make itself the key to national survival, claiming our ultimate obedience. Whenever the military establishment is not accountable to the citizenry, our nation becomes a 'national security state', increasing the likelihood of acts of lawlessness and terrorism.

We are secure only in covenant with God: "Some boast of chariots and some of horses, but we boast of the name of God." (Ps. 20:7)

C. We believe that Business has no right to sell itself as the hope of human welfare, claiming our ultimate trust. Business often destroys nature, raising havoc with earth's limited resources. Business often demeans human dignity by making profits more important than persons, especially in the case of women and people of colour.

Human well-being depends on Business sharing in God's justice struggle for all creation: "Let the sea roar, and all its creatures, the world and those who dwell in it! God will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples in justice" (Psalm 98:7,9).

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Some representatives of groups and movements involved in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation issues and struggles came together in a brainstorming meeting at the John Knox Centre in Geneva on 29-30 September 1987 to explore ways and means in which groups and movements can participate in the Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) called for at the Vancouver World Council of Churches Assembly in 1983.

I.
POINTS WHICH SPELL OUT THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS FROM THE BRAINSTORMING MEETING ON THE PARTICIPATION OF MOVEMENTS, GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CONCILIAR PROCESS ON JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION, HELD AT THE JOHN KNOX CENTRE, GENEVA, 29/30 SEPTEMBER 1987, ON THE INITIATIVE OF THE OFFICE FOR JPIC OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.

1. The "conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) for justice, peace and the integrity of creation" called for at the Vancouver Assembly 1983 is eliciting many responses from around the world. We understand it to be a diverse open and widely varied process of prayer, study, education and action, through which at all levels churches, congregations and Christian groups, movements and organizations will
(a) recognize the centrality and interrelatedness of the basic issues of justice and peace as a struggle against a concerted and integrated attack on the integrity of life and creation itself;
(b) come to see these issues as central to the faith and to Christian obedience today;
(c) therefore make a solemn commitment or covenant to work and witness for that justice, peace and unity of creation which is the gift and promise of God.

2. The process of JPIC is therefore not the invention of any ecumenical organization. It is both a recognition and an affirmation of real and costly witness for life throughout the world, and the need for this to lead us to more integrated understanding and more effective action together.

3. The WCC is committed to two related but distinct developments: to the 'enabling' of the process and to the organization, in collaboration with the Roman Catholic Church and others, of a global convocation in 1990.

4. We recognize that the world convocation must be essentially a meeting of churches since its purpose is to help the churches to articulate together a common response to the global crisis--and therefore, we as movements and organizations within the church, can only expect to participate in the convocation either by inclusion in delegations appointed by the churches, or by process of preparatory reflection and analysis.

5. We recognize that the WCC staff concerned will have a major task in preparing the convocation. In relation to the conciliar process, however, we warmly welcome the acknowledgement in documents already issued by the WCC that its role is that of an enabler and not a pioneer. We welcome its readiness to see this process not just as a Council programme, but as a process in which the WCC allows itself to act as a catalyst and an enabler.

6. Our own role as movements and organizations is chiefly within the conciliar process all over the world. Movements and organizations are frequently the most active and committed parts of the church in relation to particular issues of JPIC. They obviously have a central and creative role in developing the process and in articulating and clarifying its challenge to the convocation.

7. Or main suggestions for the participation of movements and organizations are included here and outline three stages we believe to be both possible and necessary.

8. This letter is now being sent to all the networks and groups represented and to others with whom we are in contact. The persons present at the brainstorming meeting take responsibility for this and will report their actions to IDOC who will be coordinating the responses. The letter will also be sent immediately to forthcoming international gatherings (eg. Basic Christian Communities Congress, Bilbao; JPIC of the World Collaboration Committee for the Laity Centres Movement in Japan; Theology of Peace, Consultation of Peace Movements in Budapest).

9. The letter will be accompanied by a questionnaire (copy enclosed). Replies will be received by IDOC in Rome, who will call together a small group to help assessment. The results will then be shared with those present at the meeting, and follow-up will be discussed.

II.

The "conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of creation" is not another study programme conceived and handed down by a department or committee. It emerged directly from struggles and cries for justice and a renewed sense of the vulnerability of life, under an integrated attack by the forces of death. The Vancouver call was a recognition of a multitude of initiatives already under way on a wide range of crucial issues. It recognized, too, that these issues of life and death are central to faith itself and are closely interrelated. The conciliar process must therefore be an open one which churches, congregations, Christian groups and organizations can recognize as their own, and to which they can have their own distinctive entry point. All must have the space and freedom to contribute their particular concerns, struggles and insights, in a way that leads to mutual enrichment and a more integrated social and theological understanding.

The 1990 convocation planned at world level is a gathering essentially of churches seeking to speak with authority on the contemporary issues of life, and has its own process of preparation. The concilar process, on the other hand, is broader than this. There is a close connection between the two, since the issues tackled by the churches at the convocation will emerge with clarity only if the process is effective; but the process in no way depends on the convocation, and the participation of movements and groups and organizations will be chiefly a many-sided and open process. This might be in three clear stages:

Stage 1 : INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION WITH ONE ANOTHER

The conciliar process of mututal commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation encourages groups and movements to participate in a common struggle for survival. If the churches are to take committed positions, we must all be actively involved. Groups in different parts of the world face different problems and struggle in different ways. At a time when powerful interests dominate the world order of information and economy, it is an imperative to strengthen all efforts to create a more democratic, horizontal exchange of information through new communication channels, and to support all who are struggling for food, justice, peace, human dignity and a healthy environment.

We invite all groups and movements to participate in this ongoing worldwide concilar process. We hope to develop a communication and information-sharing process in the different geographical and political areas, and to strengthen interlinkages on concerns and issues which you and others are facing in your struggle towards a just and peaceful life between men and women, peoples and nations, humankind and nature. In order to develop a worldwide network of groups and movements working within the JPIC theme, we ask you to send in your answer to the attached questions.

2. AWARENESS-BUILDING AND EMERGING ACTIVITIES

From this information-gathering and networking process, we hope there will emerge various activities, projects, events and/or coalitions. There will be different entry points--e.g. racism and sexism; old and new forms of militarization and the effects this has in different parts of the world (e.g. Pacific); the destruction of the earth by overexploiting natural resources; increasing hunger, poverty and unemployment, etc.

There will also be different styles of organization--e.g. solidarity networks related to areas of crisis, such as Nicaragua, Southern Africa, South Korea, the Philippines, etc.; networks on specific issues, etc.

A meeting of confessing movements in Sao Paulo in March 1987 issued a call for obedient discipleship in economic matters and the struggle for economic justice. Out of this a large network of movements is evolving, concerned in many different ways with economic justice. Two events are being organized to coincide with the meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in West Berlin, FRG, in September 1988. Stage One is to be an international hearing on justice and the monetary system (25-29 August 1988), immediately following the meeting of the WCC Central Committee in Hanover, West Germany, which will raise questions about the monetary system, witness to its effects, analyse its practices,

interpret these in the light of biblical faith, identify challenges to the churches, and plan possible action.

Following this, a second meeting will be called of representatives of confessing movements, of congregations and of churches to formulate a more specific call, inviting churches in all their forms to join in a mutual commitment of witness and action to transform the monetary system into an instrument furthering life and sustainable development. We quote this example as it raises principles we could possibly apply to other areas.

It has five dimensions:

(1) Awareness-building and covenanting, leading to:
(2) confessing commitment,
(3) identifying crucial life issues,
(4) analysis of the links and the theological interpretation and action,
(5) awareness of how the entry point chosen is connected with other elements of the struggle for peace, justice and the integrity of creation throughout the world.

It starts from where we are, but leads on to make connections with others so that all our efforts can be most effective and part of a global vision.

Stage 3 : THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMITTED POSITIONS IN THE CHURCH

If the first two stages above--i.e. better communication and common action on important issues--can be successfully developed, we may be able to gain common insights into the threats to life, in time for us to hold a world consultation of movements, groups and organizations sometime before the world convocation in 1990. Our consultation would seek to articulate a committed position based on faith, and on a common social and theological analysis--and to present this as a series of well-based theses to the churches' convocation. We hope you and and your people will want to be part of this process to bring your own special gift and experience to it.

We are not asking you to adopt some big new programme in addition to your present concerns. Your own struggle and your own priorities are important, but we need each other! In a world where all problems of life and death are connected, your insights are needed to help others see more clearly and enrich the process.

We merely ask you to be ready from your own starting point both to give and to receive--so that together we may challenge the churches to see that justice, peace and the very wholeness of life on earth are concerns central to faith, to the Bible and to our Christian obedience.

III.

Dear Friends,

Please help to build this Information and Communication Network on the JPIC theme by answering the following questions:

1. With which issues are you struggling?

2. How do you see your relationship with churches?

3. How are you connected with other local or national groups?

4. We are planning regional and international meetings of groups and movements involved in various issues for sharing experiences and for building on information and communication. Would you be interested in participating in this sharing and conciliar process? If so, could you name people who should be personally involved in the organizing process?

5. In addition to the above gathering of information and networking, there will be further steps in the organizing of priorities. Would you be happy to be approached for further involvement?

6. Please add comments you wish to make:

Please complete this form and return it to:

IDOC, via S. Maria dell'Anima 30, 00186 Rome, Italy.

THANK YOU!

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Library & Archives
World Council of Churches
150 Route de Ferney
CH-1211 Geneva 2
www.library.wcc.coe.org

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Short bibliography

Allan O. Miller, A Covenant challenge to our broken word: a study carried out by the Committee on Theology, Caribbean and North American Area Council, World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Ed. by Allan O. Miller. Atlanta, Darby Printing Company, 335 pp.

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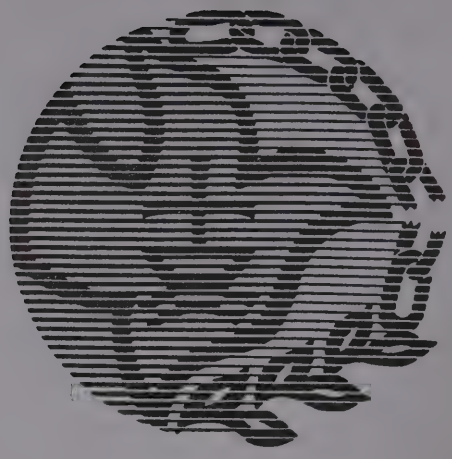

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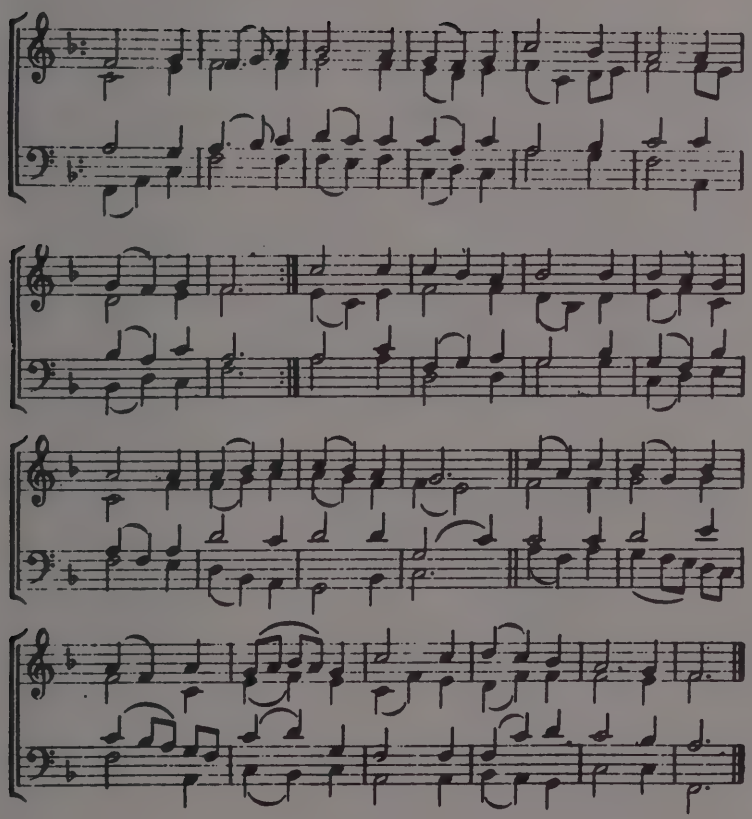
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR A FREE NAMIBIA - 4 May, 1988

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE KASSINGA MASSACRE - 4 May, 1978

Hymn : Who Will Save Our Land And People? Tune: NYFRYDOL



1) Who will save our land and people?
Who can rescue us from wrong?
We are lost - faint, false and foolish
We have slighted God too long
Save the people, Lord our Saviour
Guide us home from Country far
Holy fire, consume our rancours
Thy Kingdom come - in Africa

2) Make our land as clean and wholesome
As the white of sea - washed sands
Stretch our vision vast and boundless
As our brown-spread dusty lands
Make our people strong and steadfast
As the hills that claw the sky
Hear our prayer for land and people
"God Bless Africa" we cry

3) We believe God is our saviour:
Christ enough to heal our land
We will use the church, his servants:
We on earth his outstretched hand
May this church in loving service
Shown to all whose path is rough
Give a clear, united witness
And proclaim "Christ is enough"

4) Christ enough to break all barriers
Christ enough in peace, in strife
Christ enough to build our nation
Christ enough for death, for life
Christ enough for old and lonely
Christ enough for those who fall
Christ enough to save the sinsick
Christ enough for one - for all

L. In the name of God, the Father of
Sarah and Abraham
Of the son, born of Mary
And of the Holy Spirit who broods over
us as a mother over us

P. Amen

L. Brothers and Sisters - arise
Shine for your light is one
(Silence)

Arise and lift your hearts
Arise and lift your eyes
Arise and lift your voices.

(Silence)

The people of God everywhere are called upon to expose and to denounce untruths and to bear witness to the truth revealed to us through Jesus Christ, we are compelled to affirm the truth that every act of inhumanity, every unjust law, every untimely death, every detention under draconian laws, is a denial of the truth vested in the Lord who is the way, the truth and the life.

P. This is the truth we are called to proclaim, for it is not true that this world and its people are doomed to die and to be lost.

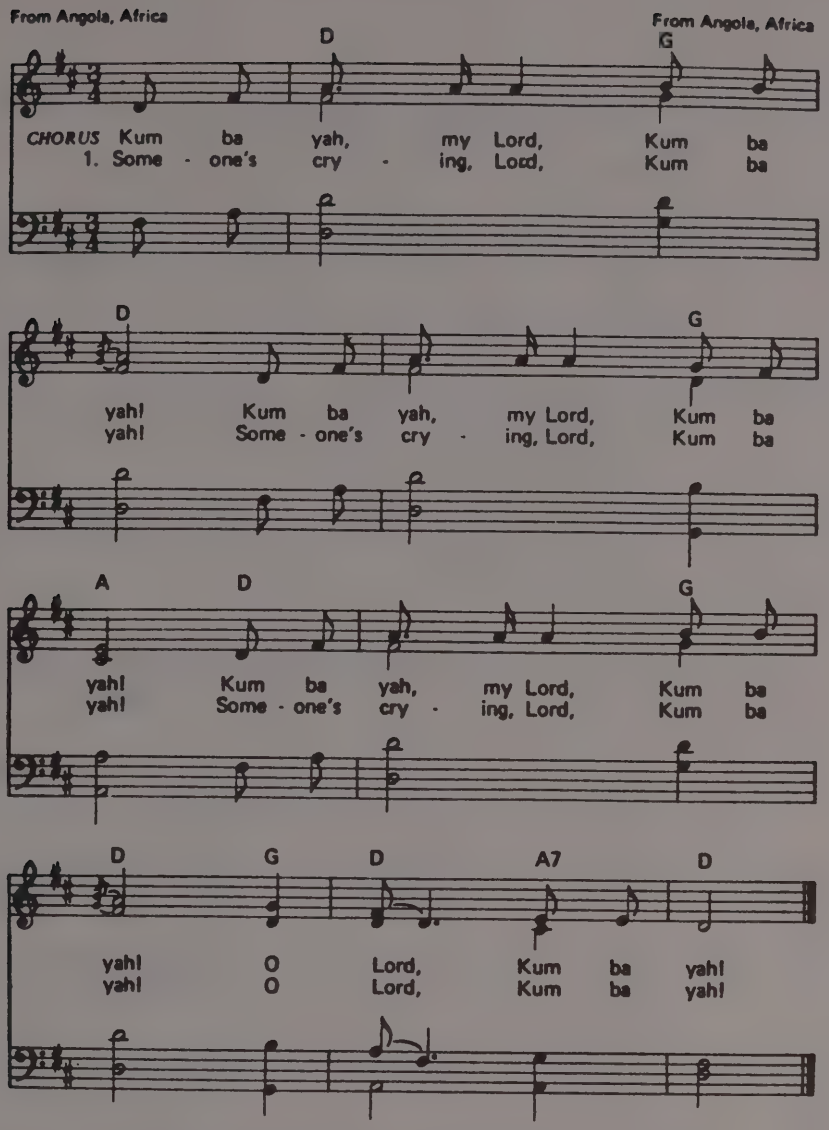
Act of Penitence

L. Dear God, we confess to you our slowness and fearfulness to join in the struggle for justice, peace and freedom of those who are oppressed,

Our slowness and fearfulness to identify ourselves with those who strive to save innocent lives by removing unjust regimes of this world,

Our slowness and fearfulness to promote the just cause in Namibia.

Kum Ba Yah!



P. Kumbayah, My Lord, Kumbayah (3 times)
Oh Lord, Kumbayah

(To be sung)

L. We did not heed your son's Nazareth Manifesto:

To preach good news to the poor,
To proclaim release to the captives
To conscientize and give vision to the blind
To liberate the oppressed
To proclaim your acceptable moment of truth

P. Kumbayah, My Lord, Kumbayah
Oh Lord Kumbaya See with John

L. We confess that we have not been sufficiently sensitive to: The thousands who cry because of their daily experiences with the South African Defence Forces atrocities, particularly in Northern Namibia,

With thousands of black pupils left without classrooms after their schools had been demolished with powerful explosions,

With thousand of black pupils and students being fed with an education which is useless for their future lives, with thousands of unemployed youth in our midst,

With thousands ignorant and unsuspecting women injected with Depo Provera at our hospitals and clinics,

With hundreds of workers left roofless and shelterless after the explosion of the Katutura compound,

With hundreds of workers who lost their jobs after the strikes at Tsumeb Corporation Mines

With those living in constant fear of being picked up or killed,

With those who are today in prisons and being harassed because of their vision of a new Namibia,

With thousands of bereaved families in our society, especially between 1978 and today.

P. Someone' s crying, Lord, Kumbayah
Oh Lord, Kumbayah

L. We confess to you, Lord, that we have not stood together against our common enemy. We fail to uplift and encourage one another in the struggle for a better future. Instead, we have allowed ourselves: To be bribed in order to serve the interests of the enemy of our own people,

To be used to despise one another on racial, ideological and ethnic lines,

To fight and kill one another.

P. Kumbayah, My Lord, Kumbayah
Oh Lord, Kumbayah

L. (Congregation will hum softly Kumbayah as the leader prays)

Someone's crying, Lord, Kumbayah
Some in millions, somewhere in many
Someone's praying, Lord
We are praying in tears and anger
In frustration and weakness
In strength and endurance

We are shouting and wrestling
As Jacob wrestled with the angel
And was touched
And was marked
And became a blessing

P. Someone's praying, Lord, Kumbayah
Oh Lord, Kumbayah

L. Somewhere in many places
There are tears of suffering
There are tears of weakness and disappointment
There are tears of strength and resistance
There are tears of the rich and tears of the poor
Someone is crying, Lord, redeem the times

P. Someone's praying, Lord, Kumbayah
Oh Lord, Kumbayah

L. We are praying, Lord
Spur our imagination
Through Jesus Christ
You have let us know
Where you want us to be
Help us to be there now
Be with us, touch us, mark us
Let us be a blessing
Let your power be present in our
weakness
Someone is praying, Lord
Redeem the times

P. Kumbayah, My Lord, Kumbayah
Oh Lord, Kumbayah

Scripture Readings: (i) Exodus 1:6 - 14

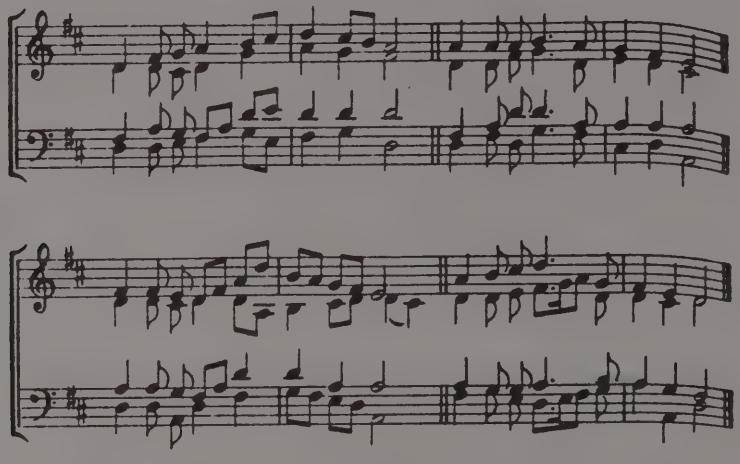
In course of time Joseph died, he and all his brothers and that whole generation. Now the Israelites were fruitful and prolific, they increased in numbers and became very powerful, so that the country was overrun by them. Then a new king ascended the throne of Egypt, one who knew nothing of Joseph. He said to his people, "These Israelites have become too many and too strong for us. We must take precautions to see that they do not increase any further, or we shall find that, if war breaks out, they will join the enemy and fight against us, and they will become masters of the country." So they were made to work in gangs with officers set over them, to break their spirit with heavy labour. This is how Pharaoh's store-cities, Pithom and Rameses, were built. But the more harshly they were treated, the more their numbers increased beyond all bounds, until the Egyptians came to loathe the sight of them. So they treated their Israelite slaves with ruthless severity, and made life bitter for them with cruel servitude, setting them to work on clay and brick-making, and all sorts of work in the fields. In short they made ruthless use of them as slaves in every kind of hard labour.

(ii) Romans 8:31 - 39

With all this in mind, what are we to say? If God is on our side, who is against us? He did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, and with this gift how can he fail to lavish upon us all he has to give? Who will be the accuser of God's chosen ones? It is God who pronounces acquittal; then who can condemn? It is Christ - Christ who died, and, more than that, was raised from the dead - who is at God's right hand, and indeed pleads our cause. Then what can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or hardship? Can persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril, or the sword? "We are being done to death for thy sake all day long," as Scripture says: "We have been treated like sheep for slaughter" - and yet, in spite of all, overwhelming victory is ours through him who loved us. For I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths - nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sermon

DUKE STREET L.M



FIGHT the good fight with all thy might;
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right;
  Lay hold on life, and it shall be
  Thy joy and crown eternally.

Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek his face;
  Life with its way before thee lies;
  Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

Cast care aside; upon thy guide
Lean, and his mercy will provide;
  Lean, and the trusting soul shall prove
  Christ is its life, and Christ its love.

Faint not nor fear, his arm is near;
He changes not, and thou art dear;
  Only believe, and thou shalt see
  That Christ is all in all to thee.

John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-75)

The People's creed (all stand)

P. I believe in a colour-blind God
Maker of technicolour people
Who created the Universe
And provided abundant resources
For equitable distribution among all his people.

I believe in Jesus Christ
Born of common woman
Who was ridiculed, disfigured, and executed
Who on the third day rose and fought back
He storms the highest councils of human beings
Where he overturns the iron rule of injustice.

From henceforth he shall continue
To judge the hatred and arrogance of human beings

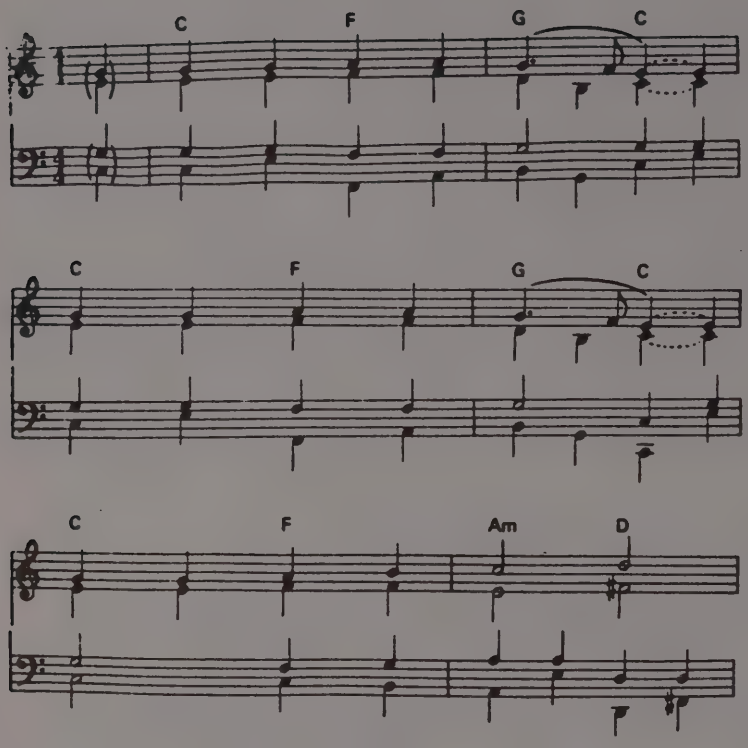
I believe in the spirit of reconciliation
The united body of the dispossessed
The communion of the suffering masses
The power that overcomes the dehumanizing forces of human beings

The resurrection of personhood, justice and equality
And in the final triumph of brotherhood/sisterhood.

L. Together we affirm:

L. + P. In the power of Christ
And the fellowship of the Gospel
We will walk in all God's ways
Make known to us of yet to made known
According to our best endeavours
Whatsoever it may cost us
For the Lord is our helper.

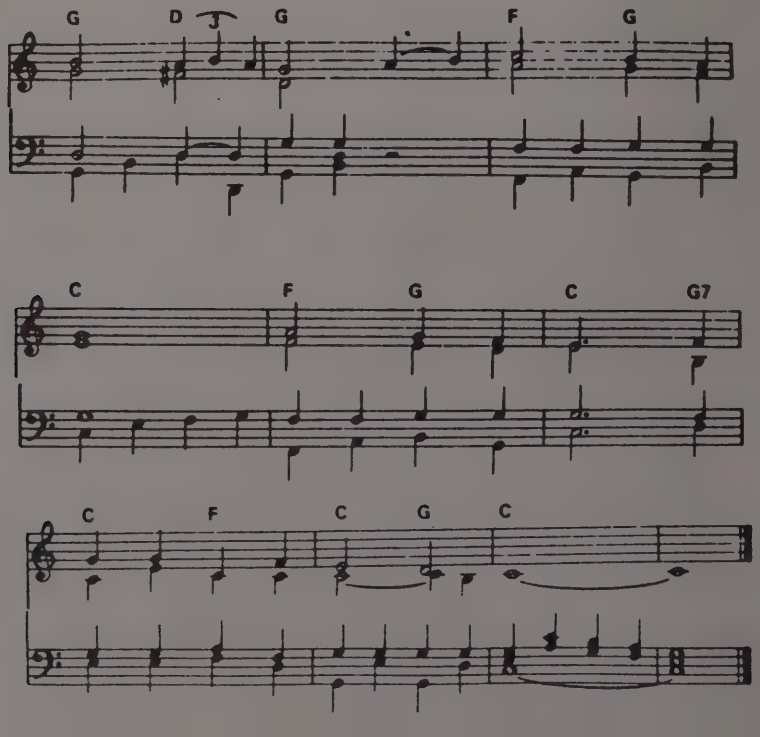
Song: We Shall Overcome



L. + P. (holding hands)

1. ///We shall overcome///
2. ///The Lord will see us through///
3. ///We are not afraid///
4. ///Black and white together///
5. ///We shall live in peace///

Some day
Oh, deep in my heart
I do believe
That we shall overcome some day
(Chorus)



L. O Holy God, whose kingdom beckons us to seek and practice truth, love, justice, righteousness, freedom and reconciliation, on this Namibia Day, we bring before your throne of grace, the nations that are under colonial rule, particularly our own land Namibia. We remember the thousands who have been victims of massacre and military conflict and occupation, especially the massacre at Kassinga at which an estimated 582 including 120 children perished. In your mercy and tender care grant them peace and rest eternal, and comfort and succour to their families. Do, thou O God, use their suffering and deaths to teach us the need to struggle, in your light, to regain our true humanity. Grant us the courage and wisdom to carry on the struggle for freedom, truth and justice. Hasten, O Lord, the day of Namibia's freedom and political independence. Hasten, O Lord, also the coming of your kingdoms when your victory, glory and just judgements will be made manifest even in this part of your created world, Namibia. This, we pray, in Jesus' name.

P. Amen

L. Eternal and merciful Father, we come before you with empty hands but with sincere hearts. Hear our cries and listen to our prayers.

We are grateful to you for having created us and placed us in this beautiful continent of Africa. Our continent, yesterday known as mission field, is gradually becoming the source of hope for the Church universal. Give us courage to thread along the path of those who preceded us and strength to fight against those in our region who promote hatred and death.

We are concerned about the situation in Southern Africa and very particularly Namibia. You know how much suffering the Apartheid regime is inflicting on us. At this very moment we remember those whose lives were untimely and brutally taken in Angola in May 1978. Can we say that the South African regime undertook this action because they did not know what they were doing?

We ask you to bless those who survived the massacre. Comfort the widows; protect the orphans; provide company to the lonely.

We pray for the people of Namibia, the Church and the National Christian Council of Churches. Give church leaders the vision of things to come and help them to stand together against the forces of division and destruction. This we pray in Jesus name.

(Prayer written by Rev. Jose Chipenda, General Secretary, All Africa Conference of Churches)

P. Amen

L. Sovereign of the world, God of truth, compassion, freedom and justice, we especially remember Namibia today. We pray for the victims of exploitation, for the victims of radiation at the Rossing uranium open pit mines; we pray for the victims of armaments and of communication technology used to spread lies. For such victims we pray that your healing hand give them the assurance of your love.

Enable the victims of power and might to rebuke the ruthless powers and to love the enemy while they continue the struggle for freedom, peace, justice and truth. We pray also for your wisdom and courage for those churches and nations which in the inter-relatedness of the world have a special chance to influence things for the good in Namibia, that we may take our responsibilities seriously and unfailingly. Hasten the day when all will be truly free and reconciled in the country of Namibia. We mourn with those who mourn in Namibia. Be their strength and consolation. This, we pray, in Jesus' name.

Emilio Castro
General Secretary, WCC

P. Amen

Act of Commitment

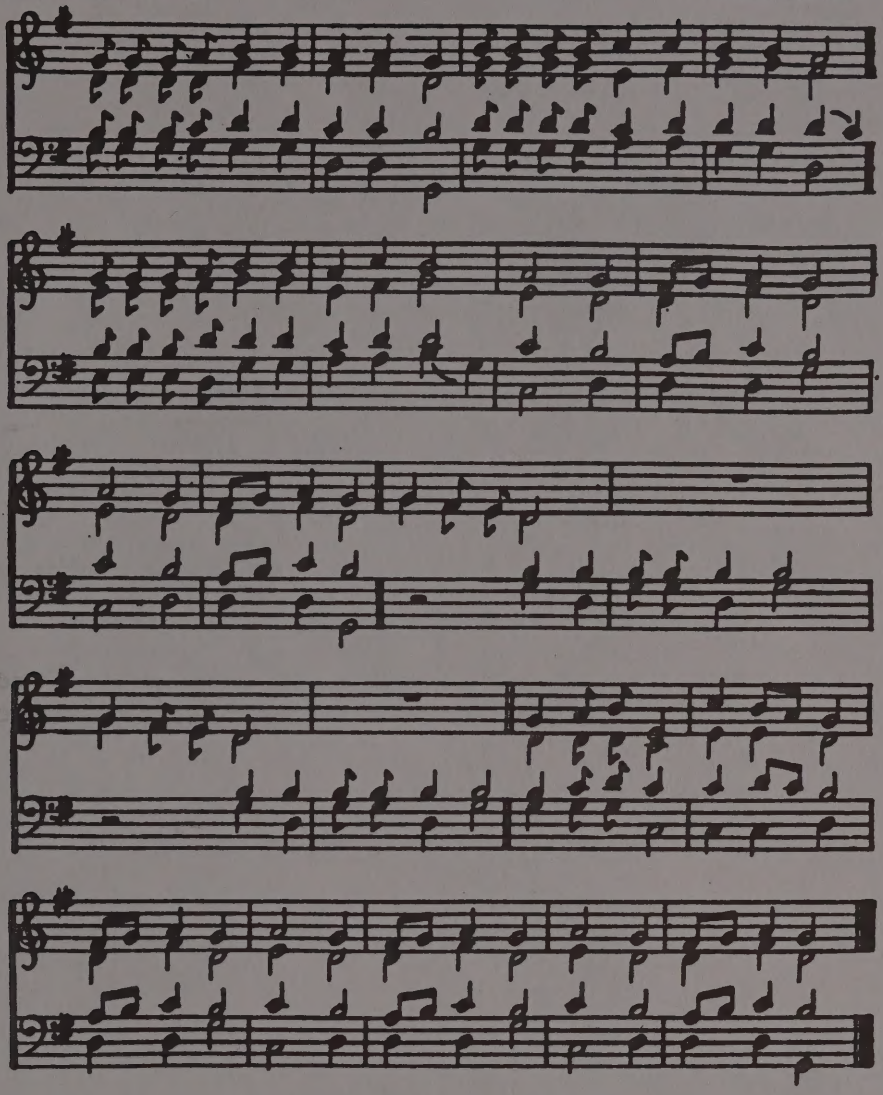
All

We pledge to give ourselves to God and one another, to pray and create that we may strive to attain the measure of the stature of the maturity of Christ. So may we seek to be signs of the Kindgdom and of God's Justice. May we be prepared to seek to be signs of change whatever the cost. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

GOD BLESS AFRICA TRADITIONAL



BLESS O Lord our land of Namibia
Lift its name and make its people free.
Take the gifts we offer now to you.
Hear us, faithful sons, hear us, faithful ones
Spirit of truth.
  Come O Spirit of truth.

Spirit of truth
  Come O Spirit of truth,
Spirit of truth, come, O come
Hear our prayer.
God bless Africa, God bless Africa.

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Resource Materials

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